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THE AUTHENTICITY WORK OF CONTINUED AND ESTRANGED CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

Master's Thesis
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Abstract of master's thesis

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Abstract

The elusive nature of authenticity in postmodern consumer culture, and the accordingly complex authenticity work individuals engage in, has been increasingly thematised in the scholarly discourse. Yet, there are to date only few approaches to conceptualise authenticity work, which is why this thesis is dedicated to deriving first conceptual frameworks. To build these frameworks, the research looks at authenticity work through the lens of practice theory and treats authenticity work itself as a broader practice, under which multiple practices can be bundled. The two focal practices this thesis investigates are thus continued and estranged practices in the context of film photography.

The first objective of this thesis is to understand how authenticity is produced through the continued practice of film photography, in contrast to the new practice of digital photography intended as its replacement. The second focus of this thesis is then the management of authenticity in the face of estranged practices. Estranged practices are thereby pertaining to hybrid practices that develop through the merging of continued practices and their newer counterparts. In the context of film photography, this thesis thus looks at retro-branded cameras that mix elements of film and digital photography, and eventually prompt estranged practices that are neither entirely the same as the practice of digital, nor as the practice of film photography.

Methodologically, the research is situated within critical realism. Through intensive research in the form of 17 in-depth interviews and complementary visual material, the thesis therefore aims at deriving conceptual frameworks that may be highly dependent on the context of film photography, but still hold the potential to derive first generalisable conceptualisations of authenticity work.

The research findings showed that the production of authenticity through continued practices is defined through three modified elements of practice. Practitioners thus derived their authenticity work through the 1) tangible materials of film photography, such as the unique, physical negatives that are produced, through the 2) extensive competences, which had to be acquired through committed effort and are necessary to operate a film camera, and lastly through 3) personal meaning, as the practice often served as a bond to the individual's past and became a significant attribute of their general identity. In addition, the importance of temporal aspects was identified, as practitioners used the continued practice to align themselves with slowed down temporal experiences.

Pertaining to the management of authenticity, three main strategies were deployed to manage the confrontation with potential estranged practices. Practitioners thus either 1) rejected estranged practice categorically to protect their authenticity work, 2) consolidated them in the dichotomy of film and digital photography they were accustomed to, or 3) accepted the hybrid practice, without necessarily perceiving it as estranged.

Keywords authenticity, authenticity work, practice theory, continued practices, estranged practices, film photography

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1 Introduction

1.1 Consumer Culture and Authenticity

Narratives of one, authentic, true inner self are permeating our daily lives from all angles. Many pursue the ideal of dressing according to one's own taste (Michael, 2015), traveling for authentic cultural experiences yet undiscovered by the tourist industry (Cohen, 1988), or listening to the newest and greatest artists, which the broader masses have not picked up yet (Michael, 2015). Even our language reflects the romantic aspiration to find an identity somewhere hidden under social conventions and performances. We are supposed to "just be our true selves" and the worst insult imaginable on the journey to authenticity is "to be fake". Achieving this balance between a hidden inner self and the one presented to the outside world seems to promise happiness, confidence, and even natural success.

Accordingly, it is safe to assume that authenticity has become a desirable attribute to acquire for one's identity. The more overwhelmed we become with news, trends, lifestyle choices and the blessing turned curse which the liberatory postmodern society of our times sometimes appears to be, the more we desire a one-fits-all solution to navigate our choices (Arnould & Price, 2000; Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Michael, 2015).

Authenticity seems to be up to the task, given its connotation as an unadulterated, outside directed display of who we are inside, independent from the oversaturated sensations of the world around us – simple, original and genuine (Cohen, 1988; Franzese, 2009; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Michael, 2015; Peterson, 2005). The concept seems to have a universal appeal, an ideal that can be sought after with very different lifestyles. It is therefore no surprise that consumer research has in recent years turned its attention towards authenticity in consumption, studying the reasons consumers aspire to be authentic (Arnould & Price, 2000; Hietanen, Murray, Sihvonen & Tikkanen, 2019; Michael, 2015), how they spin their consumption into a narrative of authentic lifestyles and identities (Arnould & Price, 2000; Cohen, 1988; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009;

Hietanen et al., 2019; Peterson, 2005), and how they manage, maintain and protect their authentic identities (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Michael, 2015).

In common language, authenticity is defined as something being true, original and/ or based on facts. Referring to individuals, it usually summons an image of someone being true to and acting in accordance with their feelings, intentions, and general character or inner self. Usually, this image goes along with sincerity and genuineness (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Scholars researching into authenticity in the context of consumer culture and identities second this definition, at least in how it is generally perceived by individuals (Cohen, 1988; Hietanen et al., 2019; Michael, 2015). After continued research, the common conclusion however, determines authenticity as an individually and socio-culturally constructed sentiment, that escapes any factual definition and is in constant movement. While authenticity is strongly linked to the ideals named above, it remains elusive to concrete definitions and depends on the subjective and malleable judgement of individuals (Cohen, 1988; Hietanen et al., 2019; Michael, 2015).

As discussed in detail in the following chapter, there do exist some attempts on conceptualising authenticity and authentic consumption offerings, which can clarify its meanings within consumer culture (Cohen, 1988; Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Apart from these, the academic discourse has focused more intensely on authenticity work, or in other words, how consumers produce and manage authenticity in various consumption contexts, such as tourism, luxury consumption or a "hip" lifestyle. Within this research stream, insights are gained not only about how consumers produce authenticity initially, but also how consumers navigate the unstable notion of authenticity (Arnould & Price, 2000; Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Hietanen et al., 2019; Michael, 2015).

In tune with this research focus on authenticity work as opposed to a focus on authentic market offerings, this study will consult concepts of practice theory. Practice theory is situated within sociology and consumer cultural studies but redirects attention from individual identity projects or social structures. Instead, the focus of investigation becomes the practice of consumption itself. The question to be answered is thus how

practices are carried out (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove, Pantzar & Watson, 2012; Warde, 2005). In doing so, it treats practices as the central framework in which practitioners and the elements constituting practices – materials, competences, and meanings – are equally significant and interdependently connected. Practice theory loosens the dualism between social structure and the agency of individual consumers, acknowledging a complex and dynamic system of consumption practices in which individual consumers and socio-cultural structures are continuously engaged. Neither consumers nor social structure are seen as a leading force, as they are recognised as fluid elements in a dynamic system (Campbell, 2005; Reckwitz, 2002; Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Shove et al., 2012).

To better grasp practice theory, it is first helpful to decide on how to define the elements of practice, or in other words, the conceptual building blocks which make a practice. Different scholars have offered first conceptualisations (Dant, 2010; Reckwitz, 2002; Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Watson & Shove, 2008), the most comprehensive to date being the division of practice into the elements of material, competence and meaning, as defined by Shove et al. (2012). This definition will also be utilised in this study, with the second part of the next chapter dedicated to a more elaborate definition of practice elements. While said elements may offer a simplified account of practices, minding these three enables a structured approach to consumption practices. They therefore offer a guideline for practice research and in this case specifically, authenticity work.

Even more interesting, and ultimately the focus of this study, are the dynamics between elements within and across practices, as well as the dynamics between practices themselves. As concluded by Shove et al. (2012), as well as earlier scholars (e.g. Gartman, 2004; Hand & Shove, 2007; Reckwitz, 2002; Shove & Pantzar 2005; Warde, 2005; Watson & Shove, 2008) cited in their comprehensive conceptualisation of practice theory, elements of practices and practices as such, are in constant movement and interdependently connected. Elements of a practices are interwoven, while often being simultaneously connected to elements of other, associated or directly related practices. Additionally, elements themselves are constantly in development. They may be sustained, but just as well may fall dormant or be entirely lost. Furthermore, elements of practice

can emerge newly, meaning the introduction of new materials, consumers developing new competences or entirely novel meanings being derived (Shove et al., 2012).

With elements of practices delivering important cues for the research into practices, this study aims to focus on two particular cases of consumption practices, continued and estranged practices. Continued practices, the first leading research subject of this study, hereby describe practices which could have been expected to disappear as they were replaced with novel ones. Instead, they are continuously carried by a significant number of practitioners, co-existing with their supposed replacement (Keightley & Pickering, 2014). Especially in business and innovation studies, disruptive and radical innovation are a much-discussed occurrence and desirable goal for ambitious producers. Product innovations of the disruptive kind imply a rapid disappearance of old consumption practices through the introduction of novel, significantly more convenient products, that usually demand for new competences while rendering old ones obsolete and creating entirely new systems of meaning. It is also inherent in the definition of such innovations, that aspects of the old consumption practices are largely no longer needed and replaced with the new practices. An easy example for this kind of shift in practice is the widespread introduction of computers replacing writing machines. Here, one replacement also marked the beginning of a ripple effect in changes for related practices, such as copying, written communication or office life in general (Abernathy & Utterback, 1978; Shove et al., 2012; Utterback 1994).

In terms of practicality and convenience, it is only logical that disruptive innovations push old practices into oblivion fast. Yet, scholars of practice theory and related disciplines have found contradictory evidence, proving that practitioners consider other aspects beside practicality and convenience when confronted with potentially changing practices. Relating back to the element of meaning, Shove and Pantzar (2005) have made a case for the difficulties that producers face when trying to introduce a new product accompanied by a new practice, especially if existing meanings are strongly embedded in potential practitioners. Their study shows that meanings from existing practices and practice elements can carry over to emerging practices, complicating, or easing the adaptation by a wider group of people. Accordingly, it shows that rational factors of utility and comfort

are not the only factors determining the prevalence of a practice. Even scholars who do not explicitly engage in the discourse around practice theory, such as Keightley and Pickering (2014), recognise a tendency for exaggeration when the elimination of existing practice through radical innovation is discussed. They conclude that the continuation of old, arguably obsolete, practices is more common than it seems and a phenomenon worth research effort. Assumingly disappearing, yet continued practices will therefore be the first driver of this study.

The second leading research objectives of this study are estranged consumption practices. As practices are always part of a complex system of related practices, including disappearing or dormant practices and practice elements (Shove et al., 2012), it is fairly logical to conclude that older, partly continued practices and their replacing, emergent counterpart may collide with each other and result in a hybrid practice that mixes elements of both. One possible manifestation of this merge between novel, disruptive practices and older, continued practices can be found in some accounts of retro-branding. Retro-branding usually entails product designs reminiscent of old, nostalgia inducing products while its functions are updated with modern technology (Brown et al., 2003). Alluding to practice theory, it can be concluded that in retro-products old elements of practice collide with new and emerging elements of practice. The result can possibly again create a new consumption practice, influence elements of both initial practices, and trigger movement in related practices. With the coining of the term estranged consumption practice, this study tries to focus on accounts of such developments within consumption practices, where the collision of old and new practices does not go smoothly and alienates or estranges some practitioners.

Continued practices and estranged practices alike, are both seen through the lens of authenticity work and vice versa, authenticity work is approached as a consumption practice itself. This synthesis of research streams is justified through Shove et al.'s (2012) exploration of abstract practices. As they expand on in their conceptualisation of practice theory, practices are not always clearly distinguishable and isolated from each other. Instead, more concrete practices, such as driving a car, can be part of more abstract practices, such as practicing forms of masculinity or freedom (Gartman, 2004). These

smaller practices are also likely to be connected to each other under the umbrella of more abstract practices, if they are not even highly interdependent. Thus, this study approaches authenticity work as a practice that may include continued as well as estranged consumption practices.

To put the introduced research streams of authenticity and practice theory into context, this study will take film photography and retro-branded cameras as its research subject. Film photography describes the analogue practice of producing photographs and is in this study focused on the usage of 35mm film cameras, which became widely available in 1925 through the invention of the first Leica camera, that consequently introduced photography to a broader group of non-professional users. Photography quickly became a practice common to a wide demographic, and at least in the second half of the 20th century, competences such as loading a new roll of film were basically common knowledge to many (Garner, 2008).

Yet, film photography has witnessed times of disruptive developments with the introduction of digital cameras. While the end result of either film or digital photography may somewhat remain the same (even though many scholars of photography and art studies will cry out at even the suggestion of this sentiment), the practice around photography changed significantly, triggering ripple effects in how photos are taken, stored, or how they are shared and consumed (Van Dijck, 2008; Keightley & Pickering, 2014). Digital photography proposes a more convenient and practical method of photography, and significantly so. Digital storage is barely comparable to the limitations of 36 frames on a roll of film, development costs are no longer demanded and even during the process itself, digital photography enables the practitioners to take high amounts of photos, while checking and even editing them right on site. With the help of editing software, it is even possible to emulate the look of a film photograph, without going through the actual trouble of taking, developing, and printing one. As suggested by scholars of innovation dynamics (Abernathy & Utterback, 1978; Utterback 1994), it would have been a matter of little time, before cameras and rolls of film should have vanished from the markets and eventually households, due to decreasing demand. While this first did look like the inevitable fate for film photography, it has recently experienced

a revival in niche consumer communities and is now slowly dripping over to broader markets (Risch, 2012; Scoblete, 2016; Scoblete, 2019; Stummer, 2018). Major players of the camera industry such as Leica or Fuji, have also stuck to film cameras in their product lines, maybe not in functionality, but at least aesthetically. Even though their cameras feature contemporary technology, the unique selling proposition remains their retro-branded design, charged with nostalgia through the companies' roots in film photography (Fuji, n.d.-a; Leica, n.d.-a).

Nostalgia brings us back to the starting theme of theories consulted for this study, as the concept of nostalgic consumption is deeply interwoven with the concept of authenticity in consumption, practice, and identity. As established earlier, scholars suggest that one reason for the popularity of authentic cues in consumption is the way out of an abundance of ephemeral signifiers it offers. In comparison, authenticity offers a stable metanarrative to guide an individual's life choices (Arnould & Price, 2000; Brown et al., 2003; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Hietanen et al., 2019; Michael, 2015). A very familiar sounding reasoning lies at the base of nostalgia inducing consumption. The consumption of offerings considered nostalgic is often motivated by an attempt to again escape from postmodern hyperreality into the less complicated, universal reality of modernism (Brown et al., 2003; First & Venkatesh, 1995).

Practitioners continuing the practice of film photography may reject its digital successors categorically, preferring to engage in this both nostalgic and authentic consumption practice. Whereas digital photography turns into an embodied representation of postmodernity and the alienation brought about by digitalisation, automation and the separation of production and consumption, film photography seems to embody the opposite (Dant, 2010; Gartman, 2004; Manovich, 1995;). Here the practitioner is still in full control of the device, and still needs to acquire and possess specific knowledge and skill to create. (Dant, 2010). A film photograph produces an original, the single frame on a negative, whereas digital photos no longer seem to adhere to this concept of originality, with any file being easily reproduced and shared without the need of specific skills. The disappearance of a physical original and the loss of autonomy and control over the

creating process consequently can feel like a loss of authenticity (Manovich, 1995; Van Dijck, 2008).

To conclude, this study is trying to illuminate two related phenomena in a context were consumers use practices to produce and manage authenticity. First, the continuation of practices which were assumed to disappear as a side effect of disruptive innovation will be examined in relation to their ability to produce authenticity. The focus will here be especially on the meaning that practitioners find in the continued practice in contrast to the new practices taking its place. Secondly, this study will investigate how practitioners of continued practices react to estranged consumption practices, which alienate them from elements of the practices they chose to continue instead of a newer practice. Retro-branded cameras, which combine elements of film and digital photography, will be the starting point for this part of the study and give a context to how consumers manage authenticity if confronted with alienating practices. In short, this study aims at answering the following leading research questions:

- How do consumers produce authenticity through continued consumption practices?
- How do consumers manage authenticity in the face of estranged consumption practices?

In seeking answers for these questions, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of authenticity work, by observing it through the lens of practice theory. By observing how authenticity work is carried in consumption practices, there will be new insights gathered as to how authenticity is produced and managed through practices and more specifically, what role continued and estranged consumption practices play in the process.

1.2 Thesis Structure

In the process of answering the questions outlined in the previous part, this study first reviews the current discussions on the research streams consulted. The literature review therefore expands on the concept of authenticity in consumer culture, especially in the postmodern context. The second theoretical building block, practice theory, is elaborated on afterwards. In this section, the elements of practice are explained, as well as the general dynamics between the elements and between practices. The concepts of continued and estranged practices are also introduced in more depth. The literature review concludes with the synthesis of the research streams of authenticity and practice theory. Thus, authenticity work is lastly discussed as a broader consumption practice.

The third chapter introduces the research context, further explaining the connection to the theoretical fundaments of this study. After having laid out the research context, the methodological positioning of this study is clarified and justified in relation the research objectives. Subsequently, the chosen method of data collection and the data set are laid out and justified as well, before the process of the data analysis is explained step-by-step.

The fourth chapter discusses the findings of the conducted research in detail. The first part hereby focuses on the first research question, the production of authenticity through continued practices. The second part then moves on to laying out the findings pertaining to the management of authenticity regarding potential estranged practices.

The fifth and final chapter lastly opens a critical discussion about the findings and holds them against the insights of previous research, which have been discussed in the literature review. Lastly, this section identifies theoretical as well as managerial implications, touches upon the limitations of this study, and ultimately translate them into suggestions for further research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Authenticity in Postmodernity

The foundation for this study is the concept of authenticity, its meaning in contemporary consumer culture and lastly its relation to consumption practices. Therefore, the first aim of this chapter is to understand the general definition of authenticity, especially in the postmodern context.

Searching for the definition of authenticity will usually lead to claims such as "the quality of being real or true" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). In addition, the following statements can be found, filed under the definition of something authentic:

"not false or imitation: REAL, ACTUAL"

"made or done the same way as an original" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Both sentiments describe how the concept of authenticity is commonly used. There is certainly a contradiction in "something being no imitation" and "something being made the same way as an original" pertaining to the exact same term. This very contradiction represents very well an ongoing discussion about the concept of authenticity, that has kept scholars of diverse specialisations engaged and eventually inspired this thesis. While consumers are certainly able to define authenticity for themselves, the variables that lead to something being perceived as authentic or inauthentic so far could not be conceptualised unanimously. Most studies on authenticity eventually conclude that the concept is constructed and negotiated on an individual level, determined by personal knowledge, prior experiences, and the socio-cultural influences said individual is subjected to (Cohen, 1988; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Hietanen et al., 2019).

Authenticity is a flexible concept, but still the research around it is roughly dividable into whether it focuses on discussing the authenticity of objects and experiences (e.g. Cohen, 1988; Grayson & Martinec, 2004), or the authentic identity of individuals (e.g. Michael, 2015). While this study partly refers to the authenticity of objects in the sense of market

offerings, its focus will be on authenticity in relation to individuals and their consumption practices.

The main issue with the discussion around the authenticity of objects or market offerings is usually that, whatever area authenticity is studied in, consumers end up giving vastly different assessments of what makes an authentic market offering (e.g. Michael, 2015; Peterson, 2005). This can be seen in detail for example in Michael's (2015) study of contemporary fashion trends, undertaken in order to define authenticity as seen by young adults, or by Peterson (2005), who includes a wide array of primary academic resources on music to understand how consumers and even scholars within the musical field judge the authenticity of musicians and their work differently. In general, the contradictory nature of the two dictionary definitions of authenticity above seem to manifest in whichever discipline of consumer culture research authenticity is examined in. What is judged as authentic by consumers, producers or other mediators is always negotiable and impossible to condense into one factual definition, leading each study to the conclusion that consumers construct and constantly negotiate individual principles based on which they assess authenticity. (Cohen, 1988; Grayson & Martinec 2004; Gubrium & Holstein 2009; Hietanen et al., 2019; Michael, 2015; Peterson, 2005).

Still, there have been attempts at illuminating what defines authenticity for consumers, attempting to understand how authentic cues are produced and managed. With that motivation, Grayson and Martinec (2004) try to move the focus away from consumer level and onto the more intrinsic product level, by dividing the authenticity of products, services, or experiences in *indexical* and *iconic*. Borrowing from Peirce's semiotics (1998), they describe indexical authenticity as original in the sense that regardless of how it may be perceived in the present, it has direct physical and/ or physic links to what it represents and therefore is real. Iconic authenticity on the contrary implies the absences of these physical or physic links to the real. Instead it sufficiently copies what is imagined to be authentic according to socio-culturally determined images and causes associations with authentic meanings through its present appearance (Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

To illustrate this example, there are two photographs of a sunset scene in Reykjavik depicted here, taken from the exact same spot and in short succession.

Figure 1: Picture of a sunset, taken with a film camera. March 31, 2018.

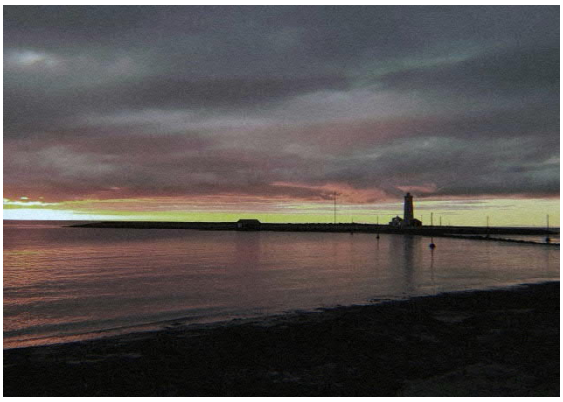

Figure 2: Picture of a sunset, taken with a smartphone camera and edited using the Kuji Cam application (GinnyPix, 2019). March 31, 2018.

Figure 1 is a good example of indexical authenticity in the case of a film photograph, in the context of this study meaning a photograph taken with a mechanical film camera on 35mm negative film. The conditions of its physical creation process produce its indexical authenticity. Figure 2 on the other hand, cannot be described as indexically authentic in regard to being a film photograph, as it has been taken with a smartphone camera and later altered with the Kuji Cam mobile application, which digitally emulates the aesthetic of 35mm film (GinnyPix, 2019). While it thus copies the look of a film photograph, it has no link to the physical production process of one. With indexical and iconic authenticity not being mutually exclusive, the emulated film photograph may though ironically surpass the actual film photograph in iconic authenticity, as it displays higher amounts of grain (the visible, corny texture, caused in varying magnitude by chemical processes that have become unnecessary in digital photography (Bellamy, 2017)), which is typically associated with film photography. Depending on the assessor, figure 1 may hold iconic and indexical authenticity, given that the person viewing it has enough knowledge to associate its looks with film photography and knows the background of its production. Figure 2 can merely have iconic authenticity, if the viewer has a pre-existing idea of how film photos are supposed to look.

It should also be noted that iconic authenticity without indexical authenticity may be categorically rejected in some rationales. In formulating the concept of *aura* for example, Walter Benjamin theorised that objects gain aura through their originality and irreproducibility, qualities that inform a strong sense of authenticity (Brown et al., 2003). In reproduction, or even in designing something with reproducibility as the leading principle, the aura of any such object is lost. If the aura is seen as a form of authenticity in this rationale, iconic authenticity is not existent and even indexical authenticity is rendered rather fragile (Benjamin, 1939). However, Benjamin himself appears contradicted in his assessment of aura and authenticity. Concerning photography, from the moment of its inception its value as art has been highly debated. According to Benjamin's explanation of the aura, one might assume that a photograph, even a film photo and especially a digital one, cannot contain aura, as it is designed for easy reproduction from the original negative and does not utilise classical artistic tools and methods. Yet, in later writings, he also acknowledges that a photograph can capture slices of reality more authentically than most other mediums, again giving an example for the contradictory notion of authenticity (Benjamin, 1972). In the end, how indexical and iconic authenticity are acknowledged and weighted remains a judgement call (Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

Like taking the (intended) reproducibility of an object as a benchmark for authenticity, Cohen's (1988) study looks at commodification as a focal point of authenticity in products, services and experiences aimed at tourists. The intention behind a consumption product is therefore put into question, drawing the conclusion that for some tourists, the authenticity of their touristic experience or souvenir purchases is based on the perceived level of commodification of the consumption good. The emphasis lies however on "some" tourists and on "perceived" level of commodification. The latter is explained, as consumers hold varying degrees of knowledge about the level of commodification of their tourist experiences, may it be due to own efforts of information retrieval or the general accessibility of information. Additionally, commodification does not necessarily equal inauthenticity in the sense of a stereotypical mass-produced consumption good – it just labels a specific product as a trade object with market value. More interestingly though, some consumers in Cohen's study showed high willingness to give into the suspension of

disbelief, enjoying highly commodified and touristic attractions as authentic. Regardless of their knowledge about a lack of indexical and iconic authenticity inherent in these attractions (Grayson & Martinec, 2004), these consumers described their experiences as authentic, because they consciously decided to assess and enjoy them as such.

Even though Cohen (1988) as well as Grayson and Martinec (2004) both attempt to breakdown the definition of authentic market offerings rationally, they both conclude their findings with the insight that authenticity is ultimately constructed in socio-cultural contexts, as well as through individual frameworks and cannot be attributed to any object or kind of object per se. Additionally, assessment factors vary greatly between individuals, often even within socio-cultural communities. Cohen (1988) highlights this flexibility by formulating the idea of *emergent authenticity*, or in other words, authenticity's susceptibility to time. Taking figure 2 again as an example, its iconic authenticity can only be understood in the historic context of how photographic means have developed. Without knowledge of the predecessors of digital cameras, the simulated grain carries no signifying value and cannot produce authenticity, iconic or elsewise. Similarly, at an earlier point in time, where digital photography was not yet invented and therefore not available as a relative point of comparison, the authenticity of film photography was assumingly also assessed through different measures.

With this, the assessment of authenticity pertaining to market offerings is concluded as an individually constructed meaning of such. Subsequently, we will move the attention towards authenticity in relation to individuals and their identities. The discourse about the individual ideal and pursuit of authenticity partly finds its roots in philosophy. Here as well, the ideal of authenticity has seen contrasting interpretations, with some scholars even equating the pursuit of authenticity to a form of narcissism. In this line of argument, seeking authenticity becomes seeking self-fulfilment through pure hedonism, while cutting oneself off from any social ties and responsibilities. Authenticity thus becomes a means to position one's own identity as superior to that of the in-authentic other (Taylor, 1992). In opposition, Taylor (1992) highlighted the dialogical character of individuals, in which he roots the understanding, that an authentic identity could only be achieved in constant exchange with others. He therefore saw the pursuit of authenticity not as the

riddance of sociality, but instead as the ability to negotiate and define one's self-perception in constant dialogue with other individuals – even if it meant to question or oppose one's socio-cultural environment. In Taylor's words, that means one could only define one's identity "against the background of things that matter" (1992, 40). It is subsequently helpful to account for the contemporary environment in which authentic identities are pursued to understand their production and management.

Accordingly, turning to the attributes and implications of postmodern consumer culture offers a starting point for understanding the demand for authenticity. Individuals in postmodernity see themselves confronted with an abundance of meanings offered by a marketplace which is asking for active identity construction and sensemaking. In the past decades, consumption has no longer been perceived as purely utilitarian and has become an important part of how consumers produce and manage their identities. The process of identity construction is no straight-forward activity and is determined by what has been described as *hyperreality* (Arnould & Price, 2000; First & Venkatesh, 1995). Hyperreality describes a defining characteristic of postmodernism, where consumption objects (e.g. commodities or experiences), are saturated with an abundance of meanings, which are detached from their original referent. Put differently, there are complex systems of meanings attached to commodities, that are socially constructed and continuously negotiated, with no single narratives prevailing and often no direct relation to the utilitarian use of the product or service in question. Therefore, a film camera for example is no longer just a device for image capturing, but in itself can be an important tool to produce one's identity. The brand of the camera, whether it is digital or analogue, or even entirely mechanical, may already communicate certain identity attributes to the outside world (Arnould & Price, 2000).

While postmodernism can be seen as liberating in its abundance of choice to define one's identity, it also comes with its predicaments. As stated by Arnould and Price (2000: 144), "the continuous flow of diverse, specialised images makes it difficult for individuals to chain them together into a meaningful message", which would enable a stable sense of self. Instead, individuals find themselves in an environment oversaturated with ephemeral

meanings and may feel tension and anxiety accompanying the awareness of the uncertainty inherit in these complex systems (Franzese, 2009; Lambert, 2018).

This predicament of postmodernism is mirrored in the desire for authenticity, as it is not rarely seen as "the enactment of the true self" (Franzese, 2009: 98) and therefore allegedly offering a meaningful, intrinsic anchor that can resist the everchanging outside world. Authenticity seems to offer the antidote to the anxiety and uncertainty inflicted by hyperreality. It is therefore more comforting for consumers to see authenticity as a dichotomy of something being either authentic or inauthentic (Hietanen, et al., 2019). This is, however, not the case, as there exists a wide spectrum between the extremes. The concept of authenticity remains in movement, is continuously negotiated and principally subjective. It is therefore after all instable and determined through outside influences, and thus perfectly in tune with the hyperreality of postmodern consumer culture in the end (Cohen, 1988; Hietanen et al., 2019).

Postmodernity is furthermore defined by a distinct division of production and consumption, often identified as one of the causes for individuals in contemporary consumer culture experiencing feelings of loss of control and alienation (First & Venkatesh, 1995; Slater, 1998). While this division itself is thematised in more detail in the following chapter on authenticity work as a consumption practice, it has also brought forward another unique characteristic of contemporary consumer culture – the dematerialisation of consumption. Not only is consumption more and more distanced from preceding production processes, but consumption goods themselves are increasingly losing their physical forms (Belk, 2013). Authenticity often refers to "realness" and "originality", which implies tangibility and uniqueness (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Dematerialisation, however, is causing these attributes to become less accessible in daily consumption practices. Market offerings are often dematerialised, digital objects which blur the lines between original and copy (Manovich, 1995). Consumers become less attached to digital products and their signifying value seems to be generally lower than that of their physical counterparts. This changes the way in which consumers can utilise consumption to inform their identities and demands increasingly complex identity work of them (Belk, 2013). This development in turn increases the appeal of consumption

goods that do not incorporate digital components, as they allow consumers to escape the complex relations between human and digital interaction, digital and physical self, and in some cases even eases the gap between production and consumption (Manovich, 1995).

To investigate how consumers manage and negotiate their authentic identity in the socio-cultural environment roughly outlined in this chapter, authenticity work has gained interest in consumer culture research. In researching authenticity work, scholars acknowledge that the assessment of authenticity in consumption practices has become an increasingly demanding task that as of now often lacks conceptualisation (Franzese, 2009; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). The aim of this thesis is to conceptualise authenticity work by utilising insights of practice theory, effectively treating authenticity work as a broader consumption practice itself. Before authenticity work is therefore discussed in more detail, the next chapter first elaborates on the understanding of practice theory that will be informing the underlying approach to authenticity work.

2.2 Consumption Practices

2.2.1 Elements and Dynamics of Practices

Practice theory is located within cultural theories and proposes a novel angle at sociological research, by putting practices at the centre of inquiry. When speaking of practices in practice theory, the presupposed dualism of body and mind is replaced by the notion of practices as an interdependent exchange between bodily and mental actions. Practice theory neither places consumers, or carries of practice, as fully autonomous nor as powerless dupes - in engaging, shaping, and disengaging in certain routines, consumers simultaneously follow and shape practices and therefore social structures (Reckwitz, 2002). This reframing can also be described as shift from focusing on the exchange of semantic representations of normative values and symbols onto a pragmatic plane, where implicit, embodied relays of meaning take centre stage. In practice theory, insights are

generated less through studying linguistic cues, but more so through the examination of motor-schematic representations and the implicit knowledge and meanings these convey (Lizardo, 2009). In turn, this results in practice theory paying closer attention to human-object relations, as opposed to research that takes human relations as the dominant source of insight (Knorr-Cetina, 1997).

Since practice theory has gained traction within consumer culture research, one of the main objectives has been to conceptualise practices. Conceptualisation on the smallest level includes the break-down of a practice into its elements. While dividing practices into elements is invaluably helpful in studying and understanding them, it should also be clear that practices are never fully isolated and always part of intricate networks of other practices and their respective elements. There is always significant overlap and defining a practice in the first place is always a subjective task. To give an example, the general pursuit of creating art is just as much a practice as the concrete practice of taking a photograph with a film camera – whether the intention behind the photo is to create an art piece or simply a personal holiday souvenir (Shove et al., 2012).

This study adapts the most comprehensive conceptualisation of Shove et al. (2012), which consolidates the research of earlier studies (e.g. Reckwitz, 2002; Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Watson & Shove, 2008) into one, comprehensive theoretic framework. They describe the three elements of practice as *material*, *competence* and *meaning*.

Material makes for the most tangible component of a practice. Most straight-forwardly, it refers to objects that are embedded in a practice, such as a camera in the practice of photography. As such it has for example previously been identified as the "commodity" of a practice (Shove & Pantzar, 2005) or just as "things" (Reckwitz, 2002). Less obvious material elements should not be neglected though, such as infrastructures or the general physical environment in which the practice is carried out. Lastly, the body itself is considered a material component of practice, which has previously even been categorised as its own element of practice (Reckwitz, 2002).

Competence marks the skills and experience that are needed to engage in a practice. While this of course includes explicit knowledge and skills, implicit knowledge in the sense of

extensive socio-historic knowledge and understanding is a fundamental part of the element of competence as well (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove et al., 2012). Especially implicit knowledge is what enables carriers of a practice to codify and de-codify knowledge within communities of practice and can therefore too define their sense of communal belonging (Duguid, 2005).

Lastly, meaning, previously also defined as "mind" (Reckwitz, 2002) and "image" (Shove & Pantzar, 2005), describes the most versatile element. The meaning of a practice may relate to its utilitarian value, but more so refers to complex, socio-culturally determined meanings and symbols that inform how a practice is understood. It includes all mental-activities and emotions included in and connected to any given practice (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove et al., 2012). Meaning is also the element that is most closely related to other research streams within consumer culture research, which for example centre around the discursive structuring of socio-culturally defined sign systems or individual identity projects. Consumers accordingly participate or sustain from certain practices to inform their identity in relation to their social environment or may on the contrary be assigned certain identities based on the practices they are considered practitioners of (Shove et al., 2012). Meanings are most intricately intertwined within associated practices and on the one hand highly susceptible to change, as for example pointed out by Gartman's (2004) study on the changing meanings of the practice of driving. While driving originally was associated with the expression of a certain social class and status and usually included a hired driver, it later became a representation more closely related to freedom and masculinity when individuals started to drive themselves, thus changing the make-up and associations of the practice of driving. Through an accumulation of individual customisations of the practice, it therefore changed social structure and meaning. On the other hand, meaning can be rather persistent, as in the case of Nordic Walking, researched by Shove and Pantzar (2005). Here, the meanings assigned to the material of the walking sticks carried over associations from other practices. As the sticks were so closely associated with other practices and their meanings, such as using them as a walking aid in high age or for recovery after injury, Nordic Walking faced push-back as an emerging practice supposed to be associated with leisure, sport and health.

As the last elaborations on the meaning of practice already show, elements do not exist in isolation or are limited to one practice. Elements of a practice are linked with each other – sometimes loosely, sometimes in interdependent relationships. Additionally, they are not confined to only one isolated practice, but part of a highly complex and flexible network of elements of practices (Shove et al., 2012).

When new practices emerge, links between new or pre-existing elements are being established. Practices in this early stage, before they become standardised, are called proto practices. On the flip side, links between elements of practices can also start to break down until the practice become an ex-practice. The crucial factor of broken links is however, that they often do not disappear without a trace (Shove et al, 2012). While elements may vanish entirely, they may as well remain dormant or become re-appropriated, two phenomena that this study will examine in more detail soon. As Shove et al. elaborated about the dynamics of practices, "the arrival of new elements may lead to, and may in fact depend on, the demise of others" (2012, 58).

In extension, the same logic applies to practices themselves. As part of a complex and ever-changing network, practices can be connected to each other in diverse constellations. As such, practices can be either grouped in loose knit *bundles* that co-exist but function independently to an extent, or they can be tied together in *complexes*, in which practices co-depend and significantly affect each other. Such co-existences and -dependencies can form, change and disappear with the collaboration or competition between practices – interactions that can be surprisingly difficult to tell apart as the following elaboration on continued and estranged practices may show (Shove et al., 2012).

2.2.2 Continued and Estranged Practices

Practices exist in complex dynamics and as established earlier, it is not uncommon that if these connections are disrupted somehow, for example through entirely new elements and

subsequently new practices, ripple effects impacting multiple practices can occur (Shove, et al 2012). Theories of innovation dynamics accordingly suggest that disruptive innovations, often in the form of novel material elements, hold the power to change practices drastically, rendering old practices redundant until they disappear entirely (Shove et al., 2012; Utterback, 1994). Yet, there are plenty of cases where this rationale does not hold true entirely. Vintage consumption of vinyl records, polaroid cameras and other outdated products are experiencing a comeback, sometimes even inspiring original producers to take old designs back into production (Brown et al., 2003). If the logic of innovation dynamics would hold true entirely and radically, many practices tied to old material elements and competences that are not frequently exercised anymore should have vanished over the last years. Still, as much as some practices depend on the disappearance of others, elements of practices rarely disappear without a trace and even dormancy is not a clear-cut phenomenon. While Shove et al. (2012) already acknowledge the diverse modes of persistence of practice elements, this studies first objective will be to investigate further specifically into such persistence in the form of *continued practices*.

Continued practices hereby refer to practices which are commonly perceived as the precedent to another, directly related practice, which allegedly replaces it. This definition of continued practice is derived from Keightley and Pickering's (2014) study on the practices of analogue and digital photography. In studying the supposed replacement of analogue through digital photography, they challenge the exaggerated dichotomy of "old" versus "new" practices. They furthermore argue against a common notion according to which technological advancement is the most impactful driving force of socio-cultural change. Instead, they acknowledge that film and digital photography are closely related practices, however, imbued with at times very differing cultural meanings which justify, yet complicate, their co-existence. Their cultural meaning and symbolic value are thus not determined by technological advancements but rather exist despite it, even exist specifically in juxtaposition. Accordingly, the lines between collaborating and competing practices are often thin, blurry, and injected with an overtly techno-centric narrative (Shove et al, 2012; Keightley & Pickering, 2014). To challenge this narrative, the importance of meanings attached to competences, material components, and practices in general should be regarded more carefully. After all, continued practices and their

successors are not only divided through different material matters and accordingly demanded competences, but usually also differentiated through implicit socio-cultural meanings that can be surprisingly impactful on the practices in question and on the practitioner's identity itself (Keightley & Pickering, 2014; Manovich, 1995).

If it is acknowledged that old and new practices stand in a more complex relation than just the to-be-replaced and the replacement, their actual dynamics become an interesting field of inquiry. This study adopts the idea that continued practices and their successor can co-exist as they have been imbued with different meanings over time and therefore differentiated enough to validate their simultaneous persistence (Keightley & Pickering, 2014). However, continued and new practices, at least in the given example of film and digital photography, do not exist independently and should rather be seen as a strongly entwined complex of practices. As touched up on earlier, with in such complexes, it is often hard to tell whether practices are collaborating or competing amongst each other (Shove et al., 2012). In addition, there often appears to be a tendency to exaggerate the competition of continued and new practices, which inflicts a heavier notion of competition that might not truthfully reflect how the interaction between practices actually plays out (Keightley & Pickering, 2014; Van Dijck, 2008).

The second objective of this study will therefore be to introduce and examine a potential consequence of interdependencies between continued and newly emerged practices. These practices will be termed *estranged practices*, as the focus will be on practices that emerge through the mix of elements inherent in continued and newly emerged practices. The concept of estranged practices is connected to the hyperreality of postmodern consumer culture. In hyperreality, material components that are part of consumption practices, are no longer necessarily connected with any utilitarian, directly connected values. Instead, they become associated with a multitude of ideologically constructed meanings, that are generally ephemeral in nature and often experienced as unstable, as they appear to have lost their anchoring in reality. This concept is equally relatable to the element of meaning in the concept of practice theory (Arnould & Price, 2000; Slater, 1998). Similarly, the mix of elements of practices in estranged practices can potentially

feel estranging to consumers, as elements of once differentiated practices are artificially merged and unanchored from their original practice.

To illustrate this theoretical construct, this study especially relates to the current trend of retro-branding. In retro-branding products, companies utilise existing product designs, which already hold strong narratives through brand heritage, tradition, and general nostalgia, and update those by integrating updated technologies (Brown, 1999). To further demonstrate how this may lead to the creation of an estranged consumption practice, figure 3 and 4 display the Leica M10-D as an example of a retro-branded product.

Figure 3: Leica M10-D, back without digital display (Leica, n.d.-b).

Figure 4: Leica M10-D, top with thumb rest (Leica, n.d.-b).

The Leica M10-D is at its core a fully digital camera and therefore associated with the practice of digital photography (Leica, n.d.-a). It therefore does not demand the practitioner to be able to load a roll of 35mm film or engage in any process for developing negatives after shooting for example. Instead, it rather needs practitioners to hold competences within digital processing. This also changes the material set-up needed. A practitioner of digital photography would need to own or have access to some sort of digital infrastructure, as well as possibly a smartphone to connect to the camera (Leica, n.d.-a; Shove et al., 2012). Yet, the Leica M10-D is also a retro-branded product that incorporates features of a film camera. As such, it is also associated with the practice of film photography and includes elements that are typical for the practice. Two prominent features are here especially interesting: the missing back display and the thumb rest imitating the look of a film rewind lever. Figure 3 shows that the camera does not include the, for digital models typical, back display which can usually be used to compose images,

look through previously taken photos, and access a range of settings with few buttons (Leica, n.d.-a). This challenges digital practitioners for example to adapt competences and embodied routines of the analogue practice, as they are prompted to frame pictures through the viewfinder only and rely on their memory of previously taken photos, instead of being able to instantaneously check their photos on a display. While this tries to mirror the more skill-reliant, intuitive and unpredictable practice of film photography, those associations might feel slightly artificial, as the camera does also allow the connection to separate display via smartphone, thus making those experiences optional and not essential to the user experience (Leica, n.d.-a).

This notion of artificial representations of past practices is even more evident in the thumb rest shown in figure 4, that looks like the rewind lever of a mechanical film camera. The haptic experience of pushing back the film rewind lever is a significant bodily routine, uniquely associated with analogue photographing, just as the consequent sound of the film strip being transported to the next frame. This embodied routine is directly connected to the mechanical functioning of the camera and essential to take a photograph. Before the first electronical film cameras or fully digital models entered the markets, there was no way around this routine (Langford & Andrews, 2016). Yet, the camera model shown in figure 4 is fully digital and therefore has no need for film being transported. Accordingly, the rewind lever has been stripped of its original function and now is a purely symbolic material component, appropriated from the practice of film photography. The rewind lever turned collapsible thumb rest therefore turns into fetishized material feature, imbued with the signifying value of analogue photography, but without being anchored in the actual mechanical process (Arnould & Price, 2000; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Manovich, 1995).

At this point, it should become clearer how mixed elements of the continued practice of film photography and the new digital practice form an entirely new practice which might be experienced as alienating – or estranged – by practitioners, especially if they are familiar with both practices separately. Still, as elaborated on in the previous chapter on authenticity, consumers navigate their judgement of material objects very subjectively and always against their individual knowledge and tolerance span (Cohen, 1988; Grayson

& Martinec, 2004). It is therefore reasonable to assume that whether and to which extent a practice is experienced as estranged varies greatly between different social groups and individuals. Gathering new insights into how consumers react to and manage these hybrid forms of practices therefore informs the second part of this study.

2.3 Authenticity Work as a Practice

The previous elaborations on authenticity already laid out how it is assessed in relation to consumption objects (Cohen, 1988; Grayson & Martinec, 2004) and how postmodern consumer culture specifically may nurture the desire for authentic consumption that can be translated into authentic identity narratives (Franzese, 2009; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). With authenticity being recognised as an individually defined attribute, which is highly subjected to diverse and continuously changing socio-cultural perceptions, the processes that underpin these assessments of authenticity become significant subjects for research. By introducing the concept of *authenticity work* (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009), scholarly discourse signalised the subsequent shift towards studying the underlying mental and embodied actions consumers take to inform their authentic identities. However, there is still surprisingly little empirical research on the subject and accordingly few to no established conceptualisations (Franzese, 2009).

While this study aims at formulating potential concepts of authenticity work through empirical research, it does so by borrowing from the framework of practices theory. As Shove et al. (2012) elaborate on, specific practices, such as driving a car, can become part of overarching, abstract practices, such as the performance of masculinity or the display of freedom. Here, authenticity work will be regarded as such a broader practice, which functions as an umbrella for various other practices that offer fragments of authenticity and accumulate into a general practice of authenticity. This also offers an explanation to the partly unexpected persistence of continued practices, that in cases such as film

photography were on the verge of being forgotten, until they experienced a revival that exceeded niche interest groups (Manovich, 1995; Stummer, 2018). Continued practices being bundled with authenticity work in general would explain such persistence in the face of disruptive, emerging practices. If authenticity work is actively carried by a significant number of practitioners, associated practices are possibly imbued with meanings that transcend their utilitarian value, differentiating them from similar practices and thus, keeping them alive (Keightley & Pickering, 2014; Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Shove et al., 2012).

Postmodern consumption culture invokes certain desires which link authenticity work and continued practices. Therefore, aspects such as the anxiety inducing abundance of meanings in current consumer culture (Arnould & Price, 2000) or the felt loss of control due to the separation of production and consumption (Campbell, 2005; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995), amplified through digitalisation (Van Dijck, 2008) may add to the interest in participating in authenticity work.

Here, especially the link between the separation of production and consumption activities gives a hint towards shared associations and meanings between authenticity and continued practices. The emergence and establishment of industrialised production triggered a distinct division between production and consumption activities. In everyday life, even in manual workplaces, skilled work with material components is rarely required anymore. Similarly, most consumption goods come ready-to-use and hardly require consumers to creatively interact with material elements or to hold specific competences (Dant, 2010). These conveniences have come at a price and resulted in a common feeling of monotony, boredom, and alienation from mass-mediated consumption all together. Individuals living in industrialised societies therefore developed a longing for consumption experiences that reconnect them with the productive activities of consumption (Campbell, 2005; Dant, 2010). These alienating consumption practices stand in direct contrast to authenticating acts that allow consumers to insert themselves into the production of their consumption, enabling them to claim agency and exercise creativity and productivity, which in turn allows them to construct an authentic identity (Arnould & Price, 2000).

One instance where the desire to be involved with productive activities can especially be witnessed is through consumers engaging in craft-consumption or DIY practices. In these modes of consumptions, individuals utilise mass-produced commodities and turn them into components of productive and creative processes that help them to individualise these commodities and integrate them with their self-narrative (Arnould & Price, 2000). Through these practices, consumers are able to physically re-connect with the material world around them and position themselves as knowledgeable and skilled individuals, eventually easing the felt alienation of post-modern modes of consumption (Campbell, 2005; Dant, 2010; Watson & Shove, 2008).

On the same note, continued practices can be defined through the utilisation of outdated material elements which originate from time periods where the separation between production and consumption was not as pronounced yet. They thus still require practitioners to hold certain theoretical and practical competences to successfully interact with these material elements, like the expertise for example that is required to develop film negatives in the darkroom by oneself (Campbell, 2005; Manovich, 1995). By engaging in such practices, consumers are able to turn commodities, such as a camera, rolls of film, or chemicals purchased for development into self-determined production with a tangible and unique outcome that is intrinsically entwined with their own labour and identity (Campbell, 2005; Dant, 2010). In general, the consumption of nostalgic consumption goods, that are no longer part of contemporary practices, but still engaged with through continued practices, appeal to consumers as an escape to "simpler" times. Consumers that might experience alienation or stress in connection with contemporary consumption practices, therefore might become more likely to engage in continued practice. For once, as they allow them to regain a sense of control and agency and further, as they connect a romantic image of past times to it, where meanings and self-narratives seemed less fragmented and thus more authentic (Brown, 1999; Campbell, 2005; Dant, 2010).

The growing interest in authentic, continued practices has not remained unnoticed by companies and has resulted in a surge of retro-branded products. As elaborated on earlier, these retro-branded products often curiously mix nostalgic material elements of

disappearing practices, while conforming to modern technological standards that do no longer ask for the same competences and have the potential to estrange previously attached meanings (Brown, 1999; Leica, n.d.-a). At this intersection of continued and new practices, termed estranged practices previously, authenticity work becomes truly tedious. The question at hand becomes, whether consumers are willing to accept these hybrid practices or whether they may become a threat to their authenticity work and be perceived as estranged practices (Cohen 1988; Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

First insights into potential strategies of managing these tensions inherent in estranged consumption practices can possibly be inferred from Crewe, Gregson, and Brooks' (2003) study into retro-retailers and their management of the tension between mainstream and alternative. They identified two main strategies to defuse these tensions. Retailers would therefore either position themselves harder on the alternative end of the spectrum, moving into elitist niche-markets, or try to re-invent the alternative within the mainstream, loosening their oppositional stance. A similar behaviour could be expected when consumers are forced to decide whether, or to which degree, they are willing to except estranged practices as part of their authentic practice. They might thus either explicitly exclude estranged practice from their authenticity work, probably leaning harder into an ideology of a pure continued practices, or try to negotiate a narrative that allows them to engage in the estranged practice, without it losing its salience for authenticity work.

On a similar thought, Arsel and Thompson's study (2011) observed protective mechanisms consumers would deploy to protect their identity from marketplace myths. Marketplace myths, which can constitute stereotypes subsumed under labels such as "hipster" or "indie", can be experienced by consumers as trivialisations of their identity, eventually rendering them in-authentic. Certain demythologising strategies are thus commonly observed to maintain their identity as independent from these marketplace myths. Through *aesthetic discrimination* consumers would usually point out their unique ability to discern between consumption practices that were directed through marketplace myths, and their own, self-directed, and genuine practice. They therefore referred to their acquired cultural position and status, which enabled them to see these presumed differences of authentic or in-authentic identity claims (Arsel & Thompson, 2011). In a

similar vein, these consumers leverage their cultural capital and positioning to *symbolically demarcate* other consumers, who they deem superficial or ingenuine. As they point out consumers who they think of as in-authentic, they simultaneously mark a reference point for their own authentic identity, leveraging their position through questioning that of other consumers. Negative associations of commodified material elements or empty meanings are therefore conveniently pushed onto another group (Arsel & Thompson, 2011). Lastly, consumers tended to protect their field-depended identity through the *proclamation of consumer sovereignty*. They therefore used their extensive knowledge and competence in their field to self-reflect on how it informed their identity. In doing so, consumer paradoxically felt the need to detach themselves from the practices in which they accumulated such extensive competences and from which they derived meanings that informed their identity. Otherwise, they would risk losing their proclaimed sense of autonomy, agency, and authenticity (Arsel & Thompson, 2011).

As these coping mechanisms already suggest, cultural capital is a valuable currency for authenticity work. The engagement in authenticity work itself can become a tool to construe one's identity as authentic (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Peterson, 2005). Michael (2015) for example notes that being able to perform authenticity work in a social context adds to an individual's social capital and can consequently influence their social standing. It is therefore suggested that not only concrete practices which fall under the umbrella of authenticity work as a broader practice further the goal of constructing an authentic sense of self. Instead, also the commitment to continuously develop one's knowledge about specific authentic practices and to continuously engage in discussions about the authenticity of any given practice is what informs one's own identity (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Michael, 2015).

To be truly authentic is therefore to also acknowledge that no one thing or practice can ever be safely and definitively be authentic. While this may allow individuals to believe in some kind of inner compass which navigates them through ephemeral sign systems, it might also lead back to anxiety caused by the never-ending task to engage in tedious authenticity work.

3 Research Design

3.1 Context: Film Photography

As many examples of the previous chapter already have alluded to, this study researches authenticity work in connection with continued and estranged practices in the context of film photography.

Film photography, often interchangeably referred to as analogue photography, refers to photography with non-digital cameras. In film photography, silver halides are exposed to light, which imprints an image on a frame of a film, often negative film. This negative film has then to be again chemically processed, before the developed film can be enlarged and printed through further chemical processing – even though it is also possible to switch to digital processing, by scanning the developed film digitally (Langford & Andrews, 2016). Specifically, this study focuses mainly on 35mm film photography, which became available to a wide range of non-professional users in 1925, when the first Leica camera model was introduced to the markets. Rather quickly, film photography, back then plainly referred to as photography, became a popular practice to engage in. On the one hand, to easily create personal memorabilia of family, friends, and experiences and on the other hand, with a bit more opposition and discourse, to create novel artistic work (Benjamin, 1972; Garner, 2008).

Early film cameras, such as the first mass-marketed Leica model, were fully mechanical cameras and required users to have rather extensive knowledge of how to manually adjust their camera settings to appropriately expose the film in varying situations. Over the years, film cameras went through multiple incremental innovations, which slowly introduced more electronical functions. Electronical film cameras thus automated some prior mechanical functions, such as focusing, adjusting settings according to motive and light situation, or transporting film to the next frame (Langford & Andrews, 2016). Yet the truly disruptive innovation that was to change photographic practice significantly, came

with the introduction of digital photography (Langford & Andrews, 2016; Utterback, 1994).

Digital cameras utilise sensors to capture images in digital format, which made any sort of film and its development unnecessary. While the isolated action of capturing an image with a digital camera might look almost the same as it does with a late electronical film camera (Langford & Andrews, 2016), the entire photographic experience and required infrastructure changed through this transition and had a ripple effect on many closely associated practices (Shove et al., 2012; Van Dijck, 2008). With the change towards digital, the once latent image was now instantaneously available on the digital back screen, a memory card now allows to hold hundreds of photos at once with no additional cost, image manipulation has become almost a natural part of the process, and even sharing of photos has become increasingly easy through digital channels of communication (Manovich, 1995; Van Dijck, 2008).

According to concepts of innovation dynamics (Utterback, 1994), this radical increase in convenience and utilitarian value should have swept film photography off the market and, eventually, households completely. For a while, it even looked that way, as established camera companies were forced to rethink their business models and discontinue more and more of their film related products (Scoblete, 2016). Then, in more recent years, film experienced a revival with many photographers, amateur and professionals alike, returning to the practice (Scoblete, 2016; Scoblete, 2019; Stummer, 2018), thus giving the context of the first area of inquiry for this study, continued practices.

Finally, the surging interest in film photography has also been picked-up by a rising trend of retro-branding. With film photography slowly finding its way back into broader market segments, producers have started to develop hybrid forms of film and digital photography, with very diverse outcomes (e.g. Fuji, n.d.-a; Fujifilm Instax, n.d.; Leica, n.d.-a). These retro-branded film photography products offer a rich context for researching the second area of inquiry, estranged practices.

3.2 Methodological Positioning

This study is positioned within the broader field of consumer culture theory and narrower focuses heavily on *consumer identity projects*, as well as *mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretative strategies*. This study investigates consumer identity projects especially by looking at authenticity as a desired identity attribute and the ways in which consumers obtain it through consumption practices. In that vein, this study also acknowledges the ideological and constructed nature of authenticity as a concept, as it is mediated through the marketplace. One goal of this study is therefore to gain insights into how consumer produce their authentic identity through certain consumption practices and how they manage and protect their authentic identity, either in accordance or in opposition to mass-mediated practices (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

In methodology, this study is positioned within the framework of *critical realism*. Critical realism acknowledges the existence of a reality independent of human interpretations, but still agrees with the subjective nature of meanings, which individuals construct in the context of their socio-cultural environment (Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2011). This study thus aims at understanding social structures and systems of meanings, here especially pertaining to practice theory and authenticity, and understands that these structures and meanings are subjectively constructed and discursive. Yet, other than pure interpretivism, critical realism still acknowledges that there is an independent reality existing under all these layers of subjective meanings and interpretations, even though it may be hardly observable and identifiable (Gorski, 2013). Accordingly, this study is aware of the complex and subjective nature of consumers' interpretations of authenticity and consumption practices, as well as the potential influences of film photography as a research context. Yet still, in seeking to understand these interpretations and subsequent consumer behaviours, this study will also attempt to identify general laws and underlying processes, as critical realism acknowledges the existence of such (Easton, 2010; Gorski, 2013).

Within the methodological framework of critical realism research methods are not prescribed by default. Instead critical realism motivates researchers to choose appropriate methods based on the research subject and goals. Sayer (2000) differentiates here between *extensive* and *intensive research* modes. Extensive research aims at collecting large-scale, holistic data sets which are easily comparable and quantifiable, and searches those for common patterns, similarities, and differences. Extensive research is thus inclined to, though not limited to, quantitative research and helpful in doing holistic empirical research, but not necessarily suitable to understand specific, experiential contexts in great depth.

This study therefore follows the intensive research mode instead, which is inclined towards qualitative research modes. As such this study's research subject is situated within a specific research context, film photography, and tries to gain an understanding of the individual experiences of practitioners within this rich context. Through in-depth interviews and observations, an understanding of underlying processes of authenticity work, continued and estranged practices is built. While these findings allow to formulate underlying processes in this specific research context, it also bears in mind the limited generalisability of the findings and the need for corroboration, if these findings are to be put to the test in different contexts.

3.3 Data Collection and Set

The main method of data collection utilised in this study is the ethnographic interview. The interviews are conducted in a semi-standardised manner (Arsel, 2017). To ensure consistency and comparability among the conducted interviews an interview guide was crafted beforehand, including questions and possible follow-up questions. During the interviews, however, it was actively payed attention to new cues given by the participants themselves, resulting in new lines of inquiry and novel, emerging insights. After each

interview, the questions were revised and iterated if necessary (Arsel, 2017). The interviews therefore developed organically and payed specific attention to the participants' individual perspectives and experiences.

The questions were oriented towards the original research questions and thus first centred around the participants film photography practice and experiences, followed by questions that prompted the participants to reflect on their experience with potential estranged practices of film photography and their thoughts on these. To discuss hybrid practices more easily, participants were additionally presented with examples of camera models that combine elements of film and digital photography in varying degrees and may thus be potential catalysts of estranged practices. Lastly, participants were directly asked about their own perception of authenticity, outside and within their photographic practice for additional context. Direct questions pertaining to or including the explicit naming of authenticity were intentionally avoided until the last section of the interview, to ensure that any associations with the concept of authenticity were naturally brought up by the participants themselves.

In total 17 interviews were conducted. Due to distance and situational complications (social distancing regulations had to be followed because of the COVID-19 pandemic), most of the interview were conducted via video-call. Table 1 gives an overview of all participants, who are listed under pseudonyms to secure their anonymity. The audio of each interview was recorded with permission of the participants and processed in form of a detailed memo for each individual interview.

Name	Age & Gender	Place	Date	Duration	Occupation	Level of Experience
Viktor	32, M	Espoo, Finland	11.03.20	01:19.45	Postdoctoral Researcher	Advanced
Tobias	23, M	Helsinki, Finland	13.03.20	01:30.30	Student & Research Assistant	Advanced
Tony	21, M	Helsinki, Finland	21.03.20	00:46.02	Student	Intermediate

Paul	21, M	Paris, France	23.03.20	00:50.47	Student	Intermediate
Louis	39, M	Helsinki, Finland	26.03.20	00:39.00	Doctoral Candidate	Intermediate
Christian	31, M	Hamburg, Germany	12.05.20	01:04.40	Civil Servant	Intermediate
Johannes	46, M	Hamburg, Germany	13.05.20	00:45.21	Photographer & Photography Teacher	Professional
Anna	26, F	Münster, Germany	13.05.20	00:50.27	Psychotherapist in Training	Intermediate
Alex	32, M	Berlin, Germany	14.05.20	01:01.05	Teacher	Intermediate
Samuel	31, M	Essen, Germany	18.05.20	00:48.16	Student, Interior Architect & Musician	Intermediate
Stephen	35, M	Weissach, Germany	19.05.20	01:33.41	Graphic Designer & Photographer	Intermediate
Felix	30, M	Schwäbisch Hall, Germany	20.05.20	00:46.37	Photographer	Advanced
Tania	24, F	Melbourne, Australia	21.05.20	00:55.00	Visual Artist, Food and Beverage Attendant	Advanced
Dirk	49, M	Soest, Germany	22.05.20	00:44.45	Caregiver in Training	Advanced
Florian	21, M	Essen, Germany	22.06.20	00:55.14	Student	Advanced
Marie	24, F	Köln, Germany	25.06.20	01:30.25	Postgraduate Student	Advanced

F=female, M=male

Table 1: Interview participant overview.

The participants were searched and contacted through photography clubs, social media groups, as well as through personal networks. The only prerequisite to be eligible to participate in interviews was to be engaged in film photography. It was explicitly stated that potential participants were not required to have a minimum or maximum level of

expertise in film photography, or a specific occupation. This was an intentional choice to collect a diverse as possible group of practitioners and subsequently increase the representativeness of findings within the context of film photography. It is additionally noteworthy that two of the participants listed as students were studying subjects related to the visual arts, including photographic studies, at the time of the interviews. Some of the other participants were also professionally involved with photography, as can be referred to from table 1 directly.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked what level of experience they would ascribe to themselves in terms of their film photography practice (explicitly as opposed to digital photography). They were asked to choose between the level *beginner, intermediate, advanced,* or *professional*. These characterisations are therefore entirely based on self-perception and have not been decided by any other metrics.

In addition to the interviews a participant observation was carried out, which included three of the interviewees in addition to other participants which have not been interviewed in-depth. The participant observation was carried out in the context of a photo walk organised by a photography club in Helsinki. During a photo walk, photography enthusiasts meet in a pre-decided location that is regarded as a promising area for photographic subjects. The participants typically bring their own camera(s) and take photos while mainly discussing photography. Participant observations offer a valuable complementary source of data, that allows to expand on the insights gathered in the interviews alone (Arsel, 2017). While the interviews allow insights especially into how consumer produce and manage authenticity in terms of their own constructed narratives, participant observation and the immersion into the practices of film photography enthusiasts allows the further inclusion of non-verbal cues in a socio-cultural context which shape consumption practices and experiences (Kusenbach, 2003; Sangasubana, 2011).

The participant observation has additionally been used to gather supporting visual material in the form of 68 photographs documenting the photo walk. This collection of visual material has been supplemented by the researcher's own photographs and by images from public image banks of photography related companies. The thus

accumulated visual material collection of 73 images allows to deepen the understanding of the researched practices and depict a richer representation of the context. Some of these images have already been used to further illustrate the theoretical concepts on which this study is based.

3.4 Data Analysis

The basis for the data analysis is primarily the interview conduct, complemented by participant observation memos and collected visual material. Each interview's audio track was complemented with additional notes taken during the interview, which highlighted especially interesting emergent cues and noted instances of non-verbal communication or verbal tones which appeared significant for further context.

The audio file and notes were processed into comprehensive memos after the completion of each interview. It was paid special attention to not interpret too much into the interviews at this stage of the analysis and to abstain from already forming first theoretical concepts. Instead, the memos are intended to record emerging cues and the individual language of each interviewee as holistically and truthfully as possible, including direct transcriptions from especially interesting interview passages. Still, first possible connections to previous interviews and the underlying theory were also noted, as well as new emerging questions and leads (Lempert, 2007).

The coding process is done following the Gioia method (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2012). In accordance with the chosen methodological framework, this method of coding pays special intention to keep the integrity of informant terms, codes, and emerging themes, especially in the early stages of the data analysis. This ensures that any theoretical findings are first and foremost rooted in the research itself and not in the predetermined theoretical base of the literature review. The method thus aids the analysis in remaining close to the organically arising cues and allows room for unexpected findings.

The collected data is thus first translated into *1st order concepts*. The first order concepts stay as close as possible to the original language and terminology used by the interviewees. At the stage of 1st order analysis, emerging concepts are also listed holistically, which results in a high number of initial concepts (Gioia et al., 2012). It is only in the next step, that first similarities and differences between the 1st order concepts are grouped in *2nd order themes*. In the 2nd order analysis, the codes of the previous stage are clustered together, forming first emerging themes. These themes are not yet full interpretations, but they reduce the abundance of 1st order concepts into a manageable yet holistic number of categories. The categories are labelled to condense the first order concepts pointedly while still retaining the participant's language if suitable (Gioia et al., 2012). This prepares the data set for the final stage in which *aggregate dimension* are formulated. With the formulation of aggregate dimension. the analysis has finally moved completely on the theoretical level. The aggregate dimensions are defined by combining the insights of the 2nd order themes with regards to the research questions that informs the entire study. In formulating the aggregate dimension, the data analysis thus prepares for the final stage, where the researched processes and underlying causalities are understood and defined through the definition of a theoretical construct (Gioia et al., 2012).

As proposed by Gioia et al. (2012), the completed coding process is presented in table form at the beginning of each of the data analysis sections. This *data structure* offers a comprehensive overview of the data analysis process and will be used as the basis to discuss the insights at length.

4 Findings

4.1 Continued Practices: Producing Authenticity

4.1.1 Data Structure Overview

Despite the participants diverse backgrounds there was a surprising consistency in how practitioners perceived, described, and valued their respective practice of film photography. The data structure in table 2 summarises these findings before they are discussed in detail. According to the prior introduced Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2012), the 1st order concepts list the multiple themes, as raised directly by the participants. The 2nd order themes subsequently enable a more structured view at the existing concepts before the aggregate dimensions tie them back into the theoretical framework of this study.

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
First camera bought themselves	Hunting for cameras	Tangible Material
Acquiring cameras through (online) second-hand markets		
Collecting different camera models		
Being able to comprehend and perceive internal mechanics	Comprehensible mechanics	
Receiving haptic and auditory feedback from camera		
Specific interest in mechanics		
Precious through limited number of frames on a roll	Precious through scarcity of film rolls	
Precious through monetary value of film rolls		
Appreciated tangibility of negatives	Appreciation of tangibility of negatives	
Negatives as unique/ non-replicable objects		
Photos used for gifts and decorations	Physical connections to past moments	
Keeping memories in physical form		

Requirement of expertise and skill	High effort to acquire expertise and skill	Extensive Competence
Gaining expertise by overcoming failure		
Sense of self-earned accomplishment		
Acquiring further skill to develop	Expanding expertise and skill	
Self-built darkroom at home		
Fascination with analogue printing		
Creating within technical boundaries	Exhausting and pushing technical limitations	
Possibility to experiment		
Understanding the fundaments of photography	Understanding roots of the practice	
Learning through non-interactive resources	Autodidactic learning	
Learning through print/ original manuals and handbooks		
Learning through consuming (famous) photographers work		
Exchange among practitioners for learning purposes	Socialising for expanding competences	
Distinct colours/ tones	Intrinsic, natural charm	Personal Meaning
Inherently imperfect, organic and unmanipulated		
Inexplicable attraction to film look and practice		
process more important than results	Process over results	
Distinct film look not unique or important		
Inherently artistic practice	Exploring and expressing identity	
Tool for exploration and self-expression		
Tool to realise ideas and personal projects		
Recurring element in personal history	Deeply embedded in personal narrative	
First camera received from relative/ friend		
Commitment to practice, camera constantly carried		
Usually carrying out practice alone	Solitary practice with limited outward display	
Social activities as non-essential		
Keeping photos to themselves		
Sharing primarily for feedback/ critique		

Added excitement through anticipation	Delayed gratification	Temporal Aspects
Enjoyment of unexpected outcomes		
Rewarding feeling through long process until results		
Used for leisure/ pleasure	Detachment and deceleration	
Tool for grounding and calming oneself		
Escape from digital environment		
Slow and mindful process	Slow and conscious process	
Each shot carefully composed to use resources well		
Few shots only to capture one scene		

Table 2: Data structure: Production of authenticity through continued practices.

The aggregate dimensions of the data analysis are based on the elements of practices as defined by Shove et al. (2012). The elements are then adapted to the respective characteristics within the context of continued practices as a form of authenticity work. Additionally, many cues were given concerning the temporal aspect of the practice of film photography. Temporal aspects are an important influence on the experience of practices and will thus be discussed separately and in detail (Shove et al., 2012).

4.1.2 Tangible Materials

With digitalisation proceeding, an increasing number of consumption goods have been dematerialised and replaced through digital files, such as books, music, or photographs (Belk, 2013). While a camera is still a required material object, many other components of photography have lost their physical body with the introduction of digital photography. Instead of light being recorded on film, which must be developed and then enlarged on paper to enable the photo to become visible, a complex sensor now digitally records the

image. Images are thus instantly available on the camera screen and are not in immediate need of an actual print (Langford & Andrews, 2016).

All participants were very fond of their film cameras themselves and often collected multiple models, covering different formats, brands, and models. Some also mentioned distinct enjoyment of hunting for cameras and making special finds on flea markets or online marketplaces. For one participant, hunting for new cameras on local flea markets even became such an important aspect of their hobby, that this hunt for cameras could be recognised as a practice of its own. On the photo walk as well, participants made an effort to bring different models along, as can be seen in figure 5 and 6. Comparing and discussing camera models was one of the main activities between the photographers participating in the walk.

Figure 5: Backpack of a participant with different film camera models and additional lenses. July 3, 2020.

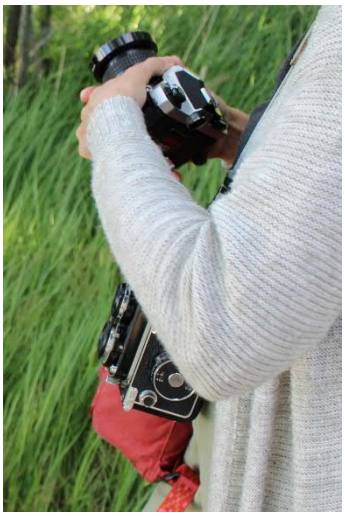

Figure 6: Two different cameras ready at hand. July 3, 2020.

This specific interest in the device seemed to be a special attribute of their film photography practice. While many participants talked about digital cameras they owned in terms of pragmatism and convenience, their talk about the film counterparts was often deeply interwoven with a certain fascination with the cameras' mechanics:

> *"You hold that camera in your hand, and you don't feel like there is any way it could break. It's a fully mechanical camera that works entirely without batteries,*

basically. [...] With every movement you can feel that there's something mechanical happening. That's very appealing." – Alex

The statement shows how Alex appreciates the tangibility of the process inside the camera. As opposed with a relatively silent digital camera, he can hear and feel how every interaction with the camera is causing an immediate reaction within it. In addition, he highlights how the mechanical camera he uses does not even have a battery and therefore works entirely without electronical components. This lack of electronical parts and the comprehensible and perceivable process inside the camera seems to directly invoke associations of sturdiness and durability. As film cameras can include electronical components as well, assisting in and automating the photographic process, many participants differentiated very clearly between electronical and mechanical film cameras. Some participant expressed a strong preference for the latter.

"Why I like it, why I use it... I think it's mainly for the feeling of taking the picture. It's just not the same thing. Especially the cameras feel different. All the cameras I have are mechanical. I don't use any electronical ones, there are no batteries inside. That's cool." – Paul

Paul was originally asked why he prefers film cameras to digital ones, but in his answer, he started to extend this preference towards purely mechanical film cameras. Like Alex, he mentioned that they do not even need batteries. Participants who indicated this preference for mechanical cameras based their preference on the comprehensible inner process of the camera and often had extensive knowledge about what interaction with the camera would trigger which reaction within it. Alex for example was able to dismember, reassemble and repair his cameras, an activity which seemed to be a major aspect of his film practice that gave him joy.

Referring back to authenticity in the postmodern context, the appreciation of this retraceable mechanical process including all its auditory and haptic feedback makes sense. With a mechanical film camera, the practitioners are completely in touch with the material element of the practice. The film camera is neither a complex, impossible to understand black box, nor does it exclude the practitioner from activities of production (Campbell,

2005; Dant, 2010). Almost every element of the camera has a utilitarian function, which is necessary for the process and can be felt and understood by the person using it. All material elements are tangible, just as the processes they enable.

The appeal of physical material elements also became clear with the use of film rolls and the respective developed negatives. Many participants thought of film as a more valuable medium for taking pictures, often because the number of images that could be taken with one roll is nowhere near as high as the number of photos that could be stored on an SD card for example. Therefore, more film rolls need to be bought frequently, causing every single picture to hold monetary value. Moreover, the physicality of film itself seemed attractive for many participants.

> *"I mean that all our life now is in some kind of electronical storage. We communicate in these social networks. We have a date in Tinder and find the partners in Tinder. In photography actually, if it's digital photography, it is just a sequence of zeros and ones. But film photography I create in the material world. So, these pictures really exist." – Viktor*

In Viktor's statement there is a clear juxtaposition of digital photos and film photos. As digital photos do not have a unique physical form, Viktor perceives them as not really existing all together. With film in contrast, there is a material, tangible object – the negative. He does not only see this tangibility in contrast to digital photography but seems to see it as a contrast to most aspects of contemporary life. Film photography seems to be one of the fewer practices in life that still include physical material elements.

Furthermore, many participants saw a certain original and unique character within the negatives, that resonates deeply with the concept of authenticity. While a negative can be used to reproduce multiple, identical prints, the negative itself is a unique object and every exposed frame records a moment of the past that cannot be repeated.

> *"I noticed that once when I was holding old negatives from... I think from my grandparents. And I knew that negative wasn't just in the same room as my grandfather and my grandmother. It even received the same light. As my grandmother. The same light went through this negative. So, there's this certain*

connection. Not like esoteric or spiritually. But purely physical. This somehow has meaning for me." – Johannes

In his recollection of finding an old negative of his grandparents, Johannes expresses a strong connection felt between the negative he found and the exact moment and persons it recorded. He especially retraces the process of exposure of the negative and ensures to get across that these found negatives represent a physical connection to his grandparents, not a sentimental or spiritual one. He sees the connection as tangible, a connection that kept existing in a physical form until it fell into his hands again.

The material elements of film photography thus enable a sense of authenticity through their tangibility. Especially the mechanical models are straight-forward devices, were every button and lever triggers a reaction that can be felt. In addition, the storage medium of film is inherently physical and unique. The negative is inevitably needed to produce the photo and can itself not be reproduced.

4.1.3 Extensive Competence

One much discussed aspect about the practice of film photography was the element of competence. All participants displayed extensive knowledge in one or various areas of film photography. Most were highly knowledgeable of mechanics, camera settings, and/ or chemical processing, but many were also highly invested in studying diverse artistic aspects, the history of photography, or even socio-cultural topics. It is noteworthy that yet almost all participants were certain that there was still a lot more they could learn about film photography, regardless of whether they had years of experience, a formal education or were even already using film in their professional life.

There was a general notion that film photography required extensive competence, which practitioners had to acquire through personal effort and enduring work. Frequently

participants also used digital photography to contrast this notion, as digital was often associated with highly automated processes, which required little tangible competences. Film instead was seen as the initial practice, back when there were no shortcuts to the process of creating a photograph. Understanding film was thus also a way to have a deeper understanding of photography in general.

> *"What I actually see as the advantage in analogue photography, what digital cannot offer as such, is this... I would say, skilled manual work with the images. Of course, I can also edit my images in Lightroom or Photoshop, but I am not touching them. I am not holding the negatives in my hand. I don't have anything that's real in this world, that's tangible. That's the big bonus with analogue photography. You know it's not just pixels that are buzzing around on some hard drive. It's material that actually exists." – Anna*

Anna clearly defines film photography as a practice that requires skilled work and continues to hold this required effort against digital photography. Her statement also clearly shows the interdependence of practice elements (Shove et al., 2012). Her perception of film photography as a competence demanding practice is therefore directly connected to the tangibility of its material elements. Because the characteristics of the material elements cause a need for manual, physical labour, the practice is already imbued with a sense of craftsmanship. To further this sense of craftmanship and accomplishment through autonomous, skilled work, some participants also extended their practice of shooting film to developing.

> *"For me personally, it's very satisfying in a way. Because I shot the photo myself and then I develop myself, so it's like an accomplishment. And it's something that I created on my own, apart from the film that I bought. [...] It's in my nature that I am self-sufficient, in a way... So, I really want to do everything on my own, including all the exploring, all the experiments and stuff like that." – Tony*

Tony's reference to self-sufficiency, as well as Anna's prior statement about skilled manual work, relate well to the idea of craft consumption. Through their extensive competence, they position themself as autonomous individuals. Tony even specifically

acknowledges that he must buy the film, but otherwise creatively uses this commodified material through his skilled craft and turns it into an authentic and individual good (Campbell, 2005). In his practice, it is important that he can do the work himself. He therefore consciously decided to expand his competence and take development and enlarging into his ow hands as well, granting him an even stronger sense of accomplishment.

Building up enough expertise to be able to experiment and explore the medium extensively is another feature of film photography that came up repeatedly. Participants often gathered enough experience with film until they understood technical limitations thoroughly and where thus able to utilise these limitations to their liking. One participant for example used expired film to create unique and unpredictable colours. Another participant, Tobias, described this pushing of technical boundaries as follows:

> *"Other people like tools that do everything perfectly, where there is barely resistance in the process. And others like a camera that fights back." – Tobias*

He illustrates vividly how gaining expertise with film photography is a demanding task, likening the camera to a subject that is hard to tame. The fight with the camera is not always decided in favour of the practitioner though, as most participants vividly recalled instances where they lacked expertise, made mistakes, or simply failed unexpectedly. Failure with film photography often goes unnoticed until relatively late in the process or is a result of ensuing process steps, such as developing. Many of the participants thus recalled poorly exposed photos, empty rolls, or negatives that got ruined during development. While many had these inherently frustrating experiences, most saw it as key moments where they were pushed to learn and now recalled these experiences positively. As Florian put it, there was excitement in potential failure:

> "*I think it's extremely exciting. There's a ton of things that can go wrong." – Florian*

Apart from learning through trial and error, all participants consulted other sources to expand their expertise. While some of the participants also received a formal education or training in photography, commonly participants seemed to prefer to learn through non-

interactive resources, such as YouTube videos or online articles. Some also had a specific interest in original print resources, such as camera manuals or handbooks, which they found especially appealing due to their nostalgic design and close relation to the respective camera. In general, film photography seemed like a very personal practice and even when it came to learning about the practice, most participants preferred learning on their own. When asked about their consulted resources to learn about the artistic aspects of film photography, one participant for example explained:

> *"I don't like to be taught artistic things; I don't think you can be taught those. I think you can analyse other peoples' pictures and learn your own artistic values from there. So, I don't like guides in a way. [...] Even if it is written somewhere, I like to learn it myself." – Tobias*

While it should be acknowledged that Tobias was talking about artistic learnings in this specific instance, not technical ones, it was a common theme for participants to have acquired most of their competences autodidactically on purpose. Tobias' statement as well can thus be interpreted as an expression of autonomy in his film photography practice, crafting an independent and authentic identity.

Even in distinctly social activities, such as the observed photo walk, objective exchange regarding the shared practice of film photography was focused on, not general socialising. Participants were for example teaching new practitioners the basics of film (figure 7) or comparing and discussing their equipment (figure 8).

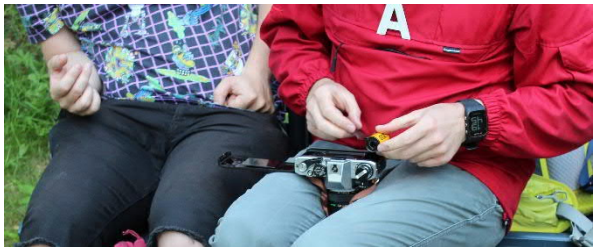

Figure 7: New participant of the club is shown how to load film. July 3, 2020.

Figure 8: Two participants exchange about camera lenses. July 3, 2020.

During the hunt for photo opportunities however, participants quickly started to disperse until later the group split up into smaller groups, setting up in different spots and going about their shooting more individually.

This individual orientation of the practice is closely related to the element of meaning in film photography as a form authenticity work and is explored further in the following part. As for competence, it became clear that this element of practice in film photography is defined through extensive expertise, which the participants acquired through considerable effort. In exercising these extensive competences, practitioners of film photography take control of the material elements and reclaim autonomy, by taking the commodities needed and from there on turning them into creative results of their independent labour (Arnould & Price, 2000; Campbell, 2005).

4.1.4 Personal Meaning

The element of meaning of a practice is usually the most complex one. Yet, there was a baseline of shared meaning among most participants. Starting with the images themselves, some of the participants already held strong associations with the "film look", such as Felix, who decided to utilise film for a photo documentary:

> *"I thought 'I want to have this on film!', because it's simply more authentic and because the look does simply have a different impact." – Felix*

In the documentary, Felix wanted to depict the lifestyle of a group of people as realistically as possible. As he seemed to hold a strong association of film photography with authenticity, he decided to use a film camera to fulfil this task. In a similar vein, one participant explained his preference for film as such:

> *"For once, it is a kind of organic material that you shoot on... I know in theory it's not actually organic, but principally, compared to a sensor, it's more organic." – Christian*

While Christian is aware that film is not an organic material in the literal sense, in contrast to digital image files it feels like it, most likely through the prior defined tangibility. In

fact, a lot of the associations with film photos were often in direct opposition to the associations held with digital photos.

> *"It's quite different. It's like a little bit cold if you want. It's very sharp and things like that. While the film is a bit more, like old school looking. I wouldn't photograph the same things." – Louis*

> *"I want to see the grain. The film grain. And... I like the noise. But with digital I don't want the noise. There I want to have an A0 print and it all has to be super crisp and sharp." – Stephen*

As can be referred from Louis' statement, digital photos often invoked associations of coldness, sharpness, and perfection, while film photos were generally perceived as warm, blurry, and imperfect. As Louis states, he would not photograph the same subjects with digital and film, which represents how the majority of participants handled their digital and film photography practice. Digital photography was usually for an efficient, professional practice, while film was thus seen as an inherently artistic and personal practice, more suitable for leisure and personal enjoyment.

However, not all participants imbued the images themselves with meaning. In the end, neither film nor digital photos necessarily match these common associations. As some participants argued, film cameras can produce crisp and clear photos as well as digital photographs can display warm colour profiles or imperfections.

> *"I could edit all my digital pictures, so they look like film. And there are people who disagree with this, but the fact is, there is no magic there." – Tobias*

Tobias' statement points out the ambiguousness that could be found in attaching extensive meaning to the film look alone. Instead, he identifies the process of film photography itself as the main source that imbues photos with meaning and value.

> *"The pictures are the memory I have, in a physical form. So, if the memory does not have any value, that is the image, why should the image have any value? I need the experience to be so significant that I want to store the memory." – Tobias*

Here, the process, or actively carrying out the practice, becomes were the element of meaning is concentrated. It does not matter as much what the practice produces, but how it is producing it and why. This valuation of the process over the final image was one of the altogether strongest themes to be identified among the participants and can be interpreted as prioritising indexical over iconic authenticity (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Even participants who did attach strong meanings to the distinct look of film images equally held the processes inherent of film photography in high regards.

The element of meaning was thus primarily identified to be inherent in the process of image capturing, with some participants extending this meaningful process to self-developing and printing. Through many accounts it became evident that the process was usually deeply embedded in the personal life story of each practitioner. This interweaving of experience with one's self-narrative in turn, has been prior defined as typical for authenticating acts (Arnould & Price, 2000).

> *"My father... what can I say, he sure had an influence on me, because back then he photographed a lot, too. So, this large format one I use was also from him. And he also photographed with 35mm back then, made slide shows at home, and so on. I got his old SLR. Recently I saw this photo [...] and he stands there just like I stand here today with that camera. And it's really amazing and I see how I am standing there with the camera with the exact same pose. It really is exactly the same. It's funny how it just got to the next generation." – Stephen*

Like Stephen, a lot of the participants received their first camera from close relatives, who had practiced film photography in front of them early on and therefore made it an important element of their earlier memories. This sharing of a practice, including specific material elements, such as a camera that has been passed on to them, often imbued the practice with a sense of connection. Through carrying on the practice of film, the practitioners were enabled to uphold a bond with family members and earlier life episodes.

In a similar vein, two participants talked about their personal photographic projects which focused on capturing places of their childhood on film.

"I went back to Vietnam in the beginning of this year. And I haven't been back to Vietnam for so long, so I just went – wandered – around the streets. I just took my camera with me to shoot stuff that I did – used to do. Like shoot the streets and shoot all the restaurants and all the food stalls that I used to go to when I was younger, before I went to Finland. That sort of stuff, something memorable for me to keep." – Tony

One of these projects was Tony's photo series of the streets and shops he walked past and visited years ago, before he went abroad for a prolonged period. As his last statement shows, taking these film photographs of familiar places while wandering around enabled him to create material objects, the negatives and photos, that represent these memories for him. These memories he can keep – the film photos give them a tangible anchoring. In another instance of the interview, Tony's account also tied this aspect of keeping memories in a tangible format back to the meaning inscribed in the look of film photos:

"Whenever I go out and I want to explore things, or like, attach some kind of nostalgic feelings to the photos, I would take my film camera with me." – Tony

Here he identifies for once, that the film photos have an inherently nostalgic impact, which then matches the intentions of shooting photos to create a material representation of personally memorable places and experiences. In addition, Tony here points towards an important experiential factor of film photography – exploration. Through the interviews, film photography appeared to be a practice that was particularly suitable for exploring one's surroundings and self. The film camera thus became a tool to explore one's own identity and past, such as in Tony's case. Furthermore, it offered an outlet to turn the explorations into self-expressive creations.

"I would say I am usually excited to go out... but, most importantly, I think I'm in the mood of the photographs I'm searching for. I don't know if that makes sense. Like if I want to make very dramatic black and white pictures, I am in that kind of mood." – Paul

In Paul's practice the meaning and sentiment of the process seems to be a direct reflection of his current emotions. When he decides to go out to shoot photos, he selects a film roll

and searches for scenes that match his own mood. In harmony with the concept of authenticity, he takes photos that communicate his internal emotions to the outside truthfully.

To investigate the role of sharing the emotions, memories and experiences captured within their photography with others, participants were also asked to explain how they proceeded with their final photos. Interestingly, most participants were genuinely not too concerned with sharing or displaying their photos. The primary reason behind sharing photos on social media sites for example was usually to receive feedback and critique from fellow photographers. For some, sharing seemed to be even less appealing.

> *"With those analogue photos... I do them for myself. And I really don't share them." – Florian*

> *"With the presentation on Instagram, on the internet... to be honest I feel like I am giving away my work. And there... I think it's difficult, it's like it is taken out of my hand." – Marie*

In these accounts, sharing even held negative connotations. In Marie's case, showcasing her photography online felt almost like giving up her ownership of the images. In Florian's case, it was especially his film photography he preferred to keep for himself. As photography was his profession, his work included the creation of digital photography for specific assignments that he had to complete. Film in comparison, seemed to be a personal practice, one that he could engage in independently and keep for himself.

In accordance with this often deeply personal photography practice, that explored and found inspiration in the participants' past, self-narrative and current mood, the practice was also often preferably carried out alone.

> *"If it's a casual shooting or when I go out with some friends, then I would use a digital camera over a film camera, so I can adjust the photos based on their preference. But when I shoot a film camera... usually it's in situations where I go out all by myself and I have more time to measure the picture, like scenes that I want to shoot." – Tony*

When Tony is shooting for friends, he seems to prefer the convenience of digital photography, as he can easily adjust what he is doing to match their expectations and wishes. In this photographic practice, the other person seems to become the director of the practice. Yet, when his practice is centred around himself, film is the medium of choice, again enforcing its meanings as a personal practice, which allows the practitioner to focus on themselves and their immediate experience.

The element of meaning was thus inherently personal for every participant in some regard, authenticating their practice. It was always somehow deeply embedded in their self-narrative, for example through the connection to family members and childhood memories, or through the use of the medium to record personal experiences and memorable places. Additionally, most participants displayed high commitment to the practice, for example by always carrying a camera with them or by allocating a major chunk of their free time to it.

This personal meaning was additionally enforced by the lacking desire to share their photos. As fittingly acknowledged by Shove et al. (2012), not participating in certain practices can be just as much contribute to identity building as a doing so. In case of film photography, engaging in the practice mostly alone and keeping photos to oneself could be thus interpreted as a display of authenticity. In the end, the practice is carried out because of an internal desire to do so, independent from outside influences or observers.

4.1.5 Temporal Aspects

Time is a defining factor of practices and their elements. Individuals manage their time respectively choosing which practices to engage in and which not, influencing their self-image. On a more subjective plain, practices also inform how time is perceived, thus shaping experiences (Shove et al., 2012). As such, time is not an element of practice, yet it permeates every element respectively. In the practice of film photography, temporal

aspects played an especially important role, as participants pointed out their temporal experience of the practice repeatedly. Especially the delayed insight into how the taken photos had turned out was a common topic.

> *"For me it's just more fun to photograph analogue. I like this uncertainty, I like this ...marshmallow effect. That you only later get to know the results and not somehow directly have a result." – Anna*

Anna's statement mirrors how all participants felt about an aspect of film photography that assumingly should be an inconvenience but is instead experienced as exciting. Referring to the marshmallow effect, a term coined through a psychological experiment which broadly aimed at proving that delayed gratification results in overall higher satisfaction (Mischel, Ebbesen & Raskoff Zeiss, 1972), Anna points out that waiting to see her photos makes her more happy about them, once she finally receives them. Instead of an inconvenience, the need to wait for photos to be developed and printed turns out to be one of the strongest appeals of film photography.

Many participants felt the same way, talking about the excitement while anticipating what their photos would be like. The occasional failure or disappointment seemed to result in heightened anticipation and joy for the next successful shots. When participants compared film to digital photography, they also expressed that the possibility of reviewing pictures on the back display may be convenient but distracting and even stressful.

> *"I found it exciting to shoot on film... because, on one hand, in digital it's convenient to just shoot as much as you want – as you can just delete it. But you also start to get into a hustle that way." – Christian*

Christian points out how repeatedly checking and taking multiple shots of one scene may increase the chance of getting the desired shot, but it also makes him feel rushed. The repeated checking of the digital back screen was similarly identified by many participants as something that disrupted their shooting practice and could even result in feelings of stress.

Woermann and Rokka (2015) described these experiences through defining practices as either *aligned* or *misaligned*, referring to the alignment of practice elements. While the

material functions of digital cameras seem to thus prompt interruptions of the shooting process, film cameras on the other hand seem to align material objects with bodily routines and competences. While the practitioners are shooting film pictures, their attention is undivided and focused entirely on capturing the desired image. Analysing, evaluating, or even editing their shots follows later, as the material set-up of film photography does not allow an immediate review.

The inherently slow process of creating film photographs and the planning, concentration, and careful execution that is necessary to receive good results was accordingly also thematised frequently.

> *"There are of course many advantages of digital photography. But I think what appeals to me so much with analogue photography is... that it's connected with taking a lot of time. And thinking a lot ahead and reflecting before you do something... because if you don't do that, there's no repeating of that situation." – Alex*

As Alex explains, he as well enjoys the extended amount of time film photography demands, seeing it as something enjoyable, not annoying or boring. He expresses enjoyment over having to extensively think and reflect before taking the shot. Film photography thus nudges him to slow down and be aware of the practice he is carrying out in the present moment. As a result, he becomes aware of the uniqueness of the situation, finding value in the fact that it cannot be repeated.

The fact that practitioners of film photography seem to value the slow and mindful process could possibly stem from a felt social acceleration of society that has been addressed by researchers in recent years. This social acceleration is thus seen as a result of consumers experiencing shorter cycles of social, cultural, and technological changes that increasingly fragment their temporal experience of daily life (Rosa, 2013). These changes can be experienced as tiring, stressful and anxiety inducing, resulting in consumers to search for experiences, hence practices, that allow them to experience deceleration (Husemann & Eckhardt, 2018). The effects of film as a decelerating practice were for example described by Tania:

> *"It helps me not be anxious most of the time as well. If I can take photos, I don't have to be in a certain mindset. But it helps me to get into a more grounded mindset when I do take photos." – Tania*

In Tania's statement film photography can be interpreted as tool to calm herself when she is in an anxious state. Taking photos does not demand her to think about anything specific, instead she can entirely focus on the process itself, and on the camera, she is working with. The desire for detachment, grounding and deceleration explains why practitioners of film photography do not experience the slow process as temporal drag, but as enjoyable. As elaborated on in Husemann and Eckhardt's study (2018), deceleration is rather the resynchronisation with a slower temporal logic, not involuntary temporal drag resulting from misaligned elements of practice.

4.2 Estranged Practices: Managing Authenticity

4.2.1 Data Structure Overview

In the second section of the interviews, participants were asked to reflect on potential estranged practices. The discussions were prompted by introducing the participants to examples of retro-branded products, as well as discussing retro-branded products they themselves were familiar with. These products typically merged material elements of both practices and demanded for mixed competences, neither entirely like film nor digital photography, and thus potentially obscured the element of meaning. The data structure for these interviews is outlined in table 3.

1st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
Rejecting features derived of original purpose	Lost connection to original practice	Rejection
Dislike of artificial limitations		
Missing internal mechanics/ haptics and auditory feedback		
Missing peripheral process steps		
Digital filters as too repetitive/ stereotypical		
Loss of uniqueness		
Removes possibility of failure		
Retro-branded cameras equated to toys	Devaluation of material elements	
Retro-branded cameras as gimmicks		
Brands leveraging tradition	Negative perception of marketing strategies	
Expensive retro-branded cameras as status symbols		
Retro-branded for superficial users		
Distancing from retro-brand users		
Unspecified disinterest	Neutral position	Consolidation
Retro-branded cameras sorted to digital photography		
Accepting purely aesthetical retro-branding	Limited acceptance	
Vague acceptance of some digital film emulators		
Film and digital as two separate practices/ no need for reconciliation	Confusion about classification	
Desire for clear differentiation between film and digital		
Curiosity about artificial limitation	Interest and ideation about novel practice	Acceptance
Curiosity about possibilities to enhance film photography		
Retro-branded as an intermediary practice/ introduction to film	Acknowledgement for own merits	
Enjoyment of retro-branded cameras as separate practice		

Table 3: Data structure: Management of authenticity in the face of estranged practices.

Participants' opinion about these estranged practices were diverse, still three main orientations became evident. They thus either tended to reject the estranged practice entirely, attempted to consolidate it with the existing practices, or were willing to accept the estranged practice as a potential new one. While there was usually a tendency towards

one of these management strategies, many participants still negotiated their own position towards the potentially estranging practice.

4.2.2 Rejection

Most of the participants did not accept estranged photographic practices. Here, authenticity was managed and sustained through the rejection and discrediting of practices that obscured sources for authenticity.

Participants were generally able to pinpoint rather clearly why they rejected estranged practices in comparison to the continued practice of film photography. One of the main pain points was the lost connection to the tangible and perceivable process prior outlined in the discussion of tangible materials.

> *"I have no motivation to photograph with that. It looks good, it holds nicely in your hand... but it's somehow not awesome. You press it and you only hear 'beep, beep'... or you can even change that sound, so you hear a cat or something and it's just terrible. There's nothing rattling. And with analogue cameras, or with mechanical cameras, you press it, and everything moves. It's a completely different feeling." – Alex*

Alex here describes how the important aspect of the felt internal mechanics, the haptic feedback and the sounds, are lost in any camera that integrates digital features. He acknowledges that certain retro-branded cameras get the basic look and hand-held feel of film cameras right, but still misses the physical connection between the mechanics and the sounds and movements they create naturally. He indicates a certain internal, natural inclination towards film cameras, as he states that he simply does not have motivation to use the retro-branded alternatives. His statement implies that his rejection of film is by no means influenced through a certain image he wants to create about himself or his practice.

It just happens to be, that despite some good attributes of the camera in question, he cannot find much joy in it and prefers film, thus strengthening the authenticity of his film photography practice.

Like Alex's stance, many participants also expressed a dislike of the artificial nature of some of the limitations that retro-branded cameras imposed on the user. As they were aware that these limitations were not dictated by the mechanical make-up of the camera, they lost their appeal.

> *"You could set imaginary constraints for digital cameras. Remove screens, make it only take a limited amount of images. But I would know that these would be just artificial constraints. Whereas in film I know this is what I am getting." – Tobias*

The examples of possible constraining features in retro-branded cameras given by Tobias represent some of the main features which shape the film photography practice. Yet, he is very clear that he cannot enjoy these limitations if there is no actual reason for them. The lack of indexical authenticity thus becomes a deal breaker, regardless of how well the camera is designed elsewise (Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

While Tobias' and Alex's accounts were argumentative in nature, there were also other accounts that rejected estranged practices categorically. It was therefore a common theme to discredit retro-branded cameras as toys, silly gimmicks, or status symbols devoid of any deeper meaning. Their monetary value or material make-up did not add much value for them either.

> *"I will not use it for photography. I mean, it is even better to use some second-hand film camera in bad condition, rather than that. This is not for photographers. This is a toy, an expensive toy.*" – Viktor

In his statement, Viktor is specifically referring to the Leica M10-D camera introduced earlier as an example for high-end retro cameras. While the product design tries to induce a film like practice, the camera functions digitally and produces high quality images (Leica, n.d.-a). Yet, Viktor rejects the camera entirely and discredits it as a material element for an authentic photographic practice. He would not even consider users as photographers.

Lastly, participants displayed high awareness of the layer of marketing surrounding most retro-branded products. Camera models that were heavily marketed with the help of elements of meaning borrowed from film photography practices were thus criticised harshly. Interestingly, especially brands with a long tradition in the photography industry and with roots in film photography were scrutinised.

> *"Those are cool ideas, but I think that its sometimes just marketing tricks. Leica is very good with their Marketing in that regard: 'We invented it! We are still doing it the exact same way!'" – Stephen*

> *"I think they force themselves... come hell or high water it's like 'yeah, it is just like the analogue feeling'. It's all being pressed in there, and the more they pressure this in there, the more inauthentic it gets." – Stephen*

Stephen even implies that he is interested in some of the ideas behind the discussed Leica camera, but in the end these ideas seem to lose any value once they are identified as marketing strategies. In the case of Leica, the attempt to commodify their brand heritage seems to result in a direct loss of authenticity (Cohen, 1988). By extension, the camera itself seems to lose its ability to function as a material element connected to authenticity work.

In general, participants who upheld the value of their continued practice as authenticity work through rejection seemed to perceive estranged practices the strongest as exactly that – estranging.

4.2.3 Consolidation

Some participants did not categorically reject estranged practices induced by retro-branded cameras, yet they either displayed clear disinterest in the practice or were still undecided on how they felt about them. Commonly, participants who were still debating

about how they should assess retro-branded cameras tried to integrate the estranged practice into the already existing categories of film or digital photography.

> *"I once got one of these, hoping that it would be somehow close to film, but it's not. Other than in optics they are really digital and far away from... I mean optically yes, but as film... it just doesn't live up to it." – Felix*

In his experience with retro-branded cameras Felix indicates, that at some point he was holding the expectation, that retro-branded cameras may allow him to exercise the continued practice of film with the convenience of the digital counterpart. However, his experience did not fulfil his expectations and made him in turn sort the estranged practice in with digital photography. Ultimately, he did not define the estranged practice as a separate practice at all, and instead consolidated it with the practice of digital, which he is already familiar with. A similar experience was recounted by Tony, who had been using a digital Fujifilm camera, of which an exemplary picture can be seen in figure 9.

Figure 9: Fujifilm X-A7 camera (Fuji, n.d.-b).

> *"I would still prefer using film film. Rather than joining the two together. But the Fujifilm... although it has the model of a classic SLR... the digital photos are really great. [...] It kind of gives the feel of a film camera, but still. It's digital." – Tony*

Tony's statement as well shows that he sees a distinction of only two practice, no potential third one. He acknowledges the film aesthetic of the camera itself and even shows appreciation for the film simulation effect the camera has built in. Yet, here as well, his statement indicates that he is to a degree still debating where to sort the estranged practice

prompted by the camera. While he partly experiences the camera as close to film photography, he still ultimately consolidates it with the digital practice.

In the end, the consolidation of the estranged practice does not seem to go smoothly. Instead, it often seemed more like the participants wanted to sort the estranged practice in with another, but ultimately struggled to make it fit in with either of them sufficiently.

> *"With those filters, you land somewhere between both worlds... but you never really reach them. That's kind of the point." – Christian*

Christian's statement pinpoints the struggle of trying to consolidate the estranged practice with either of the other two practice. To adapt his expression, the continued practice and its contemporary counterpart are experienced as two entirely different worlds with distinguished practice elements and especially different systems of meaning.

As such, the consolidation of estranged practices can be interpreted as an attempt to secure one's authenticity work through upholding the familiar structure of the continued practice and its opposed new practice. The tendency of participants to consolidate the estranged practice with the practice of digital photography instead of their continued practice of film, seems to support this interpretation. Through keeping the two practices separate and leaving the continued practice basically untouched, their source for an authentic identity remains largely unchallenged.

4.2.4 Acceptance

The third reaction to retro-branded cameras that could be observed was less about managing the practice and more about recognising it at face value. Here, participants did not seem to even experience the practices prompted through retro-branded cameras as estranging, but simply as different in varying degrees. They thus typically did not seem to think much in terms of a dichotomy of continued versus new, replacing practice, but

were accepting of the possibility of hybrid practices emerging. Some of the participants had already been actively ideating about possibilities of such hybrid cameras and photographic practices.

> *"I already, maybe, thought about taking a very limited card, for example a one gigabyte SD card. So, I can have the same [limitation] in digital. I like to be limited and take only the shots I really want to." – Paul*

With contemplating how to reproduce the limited number of available frames on a film roll within his digital photography practice, Paul had already been ideating about how to mix the practices of film and digital. As such, he showed curiosity about possible hybrid photographic practices and did not seem to encounter much tension between them and his original film practice. Earlier in the interview, he had already expressed that he generally was not exclusively interested in film photography, but simultaneously enjoyed digital photography. He decided which practice to participate in based on his current mood or intentions.

In a similar vein, Tania also expressed no animosity towards hybrid practices. She instead saw them either as a way to introduce people to the original film practice or just as a fun activity with its own merits, even though she personally preferred her film practice.

> *"At the end of the day it's just fun to do. Like... editing Instagram photos is just nice and fun – and an app is an apt way to do that. It doesn't do any harm and might get them interested in film photography." – Tania*

Talking about a mobile film simulation app, Tania acknowledges that the practice might be enjoyable on its own and thus sees no problem in it or the app. It is interesting to note in this instance, that Tania was one of the participants that had studied photography theory and was well familiar with earlier discourses on the authenticity of film photography.

> *"I feel like digital is not less or more authentic than analogue. I mean... editing it and trying to pass it off as film is kind of shady, but if you just... use and app or go into photoshop to add some grain and warmth, there is no real harm in that to me. Like analogue functions different to me than just being this snobbish kind of thing." – Tania*

She seemed generally comfortable with a vague idea of authenticity, earlier stating that she herself thought that “nothing is really authentic”. Based on her understanding of authenticity, there was inherently less conflict and tension between the different practices, as they were subsequently not as much linked to authenticity work in the first place.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussing Authenticity Work

5.1.1 Elements of Continued Practices as Authenticity Work

How consumers produce authenticity through continued practices is the first research question of this study. To answer this question, continued practices are viewed as practices under the umbrella of authenticity work. Viewing authenticity work as a consumption practice itself, inspired the identification of specific practice elements of authenticity work (Shove et al., 2012). Through in-depth interviews with practitioners of film photography, the three practice elements of authenticity work have thus been defined as 1) *tangible material*, 2) *extensive competence*, and 3) *personal meaning*. In addition, *temporal aspects* have been identified as a significant factor that determines part of the appeal of film photography as a continued practice.

Referring to Taylor's idea of the nature of authenticity, it always must be viewed "against the background of the things that matter" (1992, 40). Postmodernity serves as this background and informs why each respective practice element of authenticity work is characterised the way it is and additionally offers cues as to why temporality becomes an important aspect as well.

In the case of the element of tangible material, it is dematerialisation (Belk, 2013; Keightley & Pickering, 2014), an abundance of consumption goods, and the ephemeral nature of meanings attached to them (Lambert, 2018) that seem to enforce the importance of tangibility. Authenticity is connected to a sense of irreproducibility, originality, and uniqueness (Benjamin, 1939), all attributes that are suspended through the digitalisation of photography. Digital photography files are inherently easy to reproduce, as each reproduction becomes a perfect copy that dissolves the concept of originality eventually (Manovich, 1995). With the return to film photography, consumers are offered a practice that brings back the concept of originality and unique existence. Film photography is inherently a physical medium that creates physical results, and each material element

holds a distinct utilitarian meaning. In Benjamin's times, the film negative may have appeared as a medium intended for the mass production of the ever-same print, but in the time of digitalisation, the negative itself seems charmingly unique and touchable (Benjamin, 1939). While the negative may of course be used to produce multiple, highly identical prints, itself remains unique and connected through a past moment that cannot be repeated. In addition, the limitation of the film roll to a mere 36 frames stands in contrast with the almost unlimited number of photos a digital storage medium can save. This limitation seems to be an appreciated change of scenery in a consumer culture that otherwise floods the market with an abundance of goods to desire and choose from. Whereas consumers may experience stress or anxiety in this usual flow of consumption goods, film photography limits them by demanding less choice and more awareness of their immediate surroundings (Lambert, 2018).

The element of extensive competences seems especially attractive if held against the backdrop of the postmodern division of production and consumption. As established earlier, in postmodern consumer culture the typical consumer is not needed as an active participant in production processes (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). Instead, consumption goods come ready to use and, as in the case of digital cameras as well, demand little competence for their immediate use. The process has thus become automated to a degree where consumers can be alienated from the production process of the consumption good and from the subsequent use of the consumption good itself. They may start to feel alienated, dependent on technology, and generally unskilled (Campbell, 2005; Dant, 2010). To participate in the practice of film photography in contrast, even amateur users need to first require a minimum of competence to take their first successful shots. Afterwards, film photography offers extensive possibilities to extend the practice, either through adding new camera formats, learning to push the technical limitations for creative purposes, or simply by learning how to participate in other process steps such as developing (Manovich, 1995; Dant, 2010). This process of acquiring and demonstrating competence allows consumers to be self-directed and creative in their practice, ultimately supporting their identity as autonomous and skilled individuals (Watson & Shove, 2008).

Moreover, the high commitment participants displayed in expanding and maintaining their film photography practice functions as a relatively stable and independent identity marker, thus enforcing the effectiveness of the practice as authenticity work (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009).

The element of meaning was especially located on a personal level and mixed with a nostalgic sentiment. As such, some participants liked the "old school feel and look" film photos seemed to create naturally. The appeal of nostalgia in consumption practices itself has also been prior identified as specific implication of postmodernity. In contrast to the fragmented and complex consumer culture of postmodernism (Brown, 1999; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995), participating in nostalgic practices offers consumers a chance to step back into a romantic idea of simpler times. Here aspects mentioned earlier, such as the alienation from production, or dematerialisation are not as dominant (Belk, 2013; Brown, 1999; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). This nostalgic idea of simpler times is especially rooted in the hyperreality of consumer culture, which is dominated by complex, detached and ephemeral systems of meanings (Brown, 1999).

Furthermore, the element of meaning in the continued practice of film photography was dominated by deeply personal associations. Participants not only connected the practice to a general idea of nostalgia but had embedded the practice in their self-narrative from a young age on. The practice was often handed down to them through relatives, served as their constant and dominant leisure activity, was used to record personal memories and a committed facet of their self-image. As such, the practice became a stable identity marker and had the potential to serve as a grand narrative permeating a majority of an individual's life. This stability equally appeared appealing in the face of contemporary consumer culture and its inclination towards ephemeral identity markers and an abundance of commodities that can be experienced as overwhelming, uncertain, and anxiety inducing (Lambert, 2018). As such, this embeddedness in the practitioner's personal story allowed the production of authenticity, as the continued practice was experienced as deeply personal, genuine, and thus authentic.

Apart from these three modified elements of practices, continued practices seemed to also favour the production of authentic cues through temporal aspects. In the age of social

acceleration, where cultural and technological changes are increasing in frequency, participants seemed to enjoy deceleration prompted by the practice of film photography (Husemann & Eckhardt, 2018; Rosa, 2013). Participants mentioned that the accelerated and fragmented process of taking photos digitally resulted in feelings of stress and made them feel overall distracted. The repeated checking of photos on the digital screen and the high number of photos taken seemed to be convenient to a degree, but overall took away some of the pleasure when shooting. The practice elements seemed to be experienced as misaligned at times. In film photography however, participants enjoyed the slowed down activities and felt over all more aligned with the practice and experience (Woermann & Rokka, 2015). The reduced pace of the practice also seemed to be a factor that made film photography a fitting tool for self-exploration, as participants could take time to take in their surroundings without pressure. Some participants described it further as enabling them to feel more grounded and to reduce anxiety.

In conclusion, there appears to be a connection between the comparably slower temporal logic of continued practices and their eligibility to function as authenticity work. Assumingly, this association might be rooted, on the one hand, in the genuine awareness of one's immediate surrounding. On the other hand, the general alignment of practice elements, especially of the tangible material being engaged with through extensive competences, may result in experiencing the practice as self-directed and authentic.

5.1.2 Perception and Management of Estranged Practices

The second research question is based on the premises of estranged practices being created through the merging of elements of continued practices and their established counterparts. This part of the study was thus dedicated to understanding how practitioners of continued practices perceived these potentially estranging practices and how they managed their authenticity work when being confronted with them.

In general, there was a diverse spectrum of sentiments and opinions on estranged practices and the participants themselves often still negotiated their positions or were conflicted over how to react in the face of estranged practices. Yet, three different stances and management strategies could be categorised. Practitioners of continued practices were thus either 1) categorically *rejecting* the estranged practice and all its elements, 2) trying to *consolidate* the practice within the so far upheld dichotomy of practices, or 3) *accepting* the practice as a new emerging one.

Practitioners who rejected the hybrid practice of continued and established practice elements were generally prone to perceiving it as significantly estranging. Similar to the demythologising strategies outlined by Arsel and Thompson (2011), these practitioners protected their continued practice of film photography through drawing clear lines between it and the estranged practice, and consequently devalued the estranged practice. For once, they highlighted the inherent loss of important connections between material features and their utilitarian meaning to mark distinct boundaries, while leveraging their identity as skilled and knowledgeable carriers of practice. To further differentiate, they devalued the estranged practice and its practitioners through likening the material objects to playthings and occasionally through highlighting its practitioners as unskilled and in-authentically trend-driven. Practitioners who rejected retro-branded cameras categorically typically perceived their hybrid practices as especially estranging.

The second group of practitioners typically strongly perceived digital and film photography as a dichotomy of practices, with film being one extreme and digital another. While they did not necessarily experience these two practices as competing ones (Shove et al., 2012), there was often a distinct perception of these two practices as inherently different, if not even oppositional. These participants accordingly tried to consolidate estranged practices with one of the existing and familiar photographic practices. Usually, and most likely to secure their continued practice and its eligibility as authenticity work, these participants tried to consolidate the estranged practice with the established practice of digital photography. In doing so, they secured the familiar dynamic between the film and digital practice and eased the potentially felt alienation if their continued practice was to be questioned. Practitioners who tried to uphold familiar practice dynamics through

consolidation typically also experienced the retro-branded cameras as a catalyst for estranged practices, but less so, as they bundled them in with the practices they were familiar with.

Lastly, some participants seemed inclined to accept the fluid dynamics of practices and thus refrained from trying to reject or consolidate the hybrid practice. The few practitioners who belonged to this group did not seem to connect film photography to authenticity work as strictly to begin with. As such, they were more inclined to accept potentially estranging practices as an array of ambiguous practices, somewhere between film and digital. Because these practitioners were neither fixed on rejecting any new practices, nor on strictly upholding the division between new and continued practice, they barely, if at all, experienced the hybrid practices as estranging.

In conclusion, the perception and management of potential estranged practices depended on the practitioners' fixation on their preconstructed idea of the dynamic between continued and new practices. The less willing the practitioners were to renegotiate this dynamic, the stronger they perceived any hybrid practices as estranging. This seemed to additionally correlate with how tightly the practitioner connected their continued practice to the broader practice of authenticity work. The stronger the continued practice of film was connected to authenticity work, the more likely participants were to experience retro-branded cameras as catalysts for estranged practices.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The ability of disruptively emerging practices to replace their preceding counterpart entirely has often been exaggerated in the academic discourse (Keightley & Pickering, 2014). Instead, it is becoming evident that dormant practices and practice elements can be significantly more persistent than expected. This implies that especially innovation studies should be careful of overly technocentric approaches and could benefit

significantly from taking socio-cultural forces into consideration more (Keightley & Pickering, 2014).

Moreover, as already indicated by Shove et al. (2012), the dynamics between such continued and new practices are a lot more complex than simple competition. As such, continued practices alone already impose an extensive field for novel insights into social practice theory and consumer research in general. In part, this study has thus already contributed to shining some light on the complex relation between continued practices and their supposed replacement, through the lens of photographic practices. Through the interviews it became evident, that the perception of film photograph is always seen in relation to digital photography as a point of reference. Some of the appeal of the film practice seems to stem exactly from its juxtaposition to the digital practice.

More importantly though, this study adds to the still sparse conceptualisation of authenticity work. While conceptualising the concept of authenticity is an agreeably difficult task (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009), the conceptualisation of authenticity work holds potential to be furthered (Franzese, 2009). If the surrounding conditions in which authenticity work happens are acknowledged, such as postmodernity, there do seem to exist potential observable constructs and patterns on how consumers produce authentic identities through consumption. In treating authenticity work as a practice, this study tries to derive such conceptualisations, by building on well-developed and already existing conceptual frameworks. As such, this study was able to demonstrate how consumer can use practices as authenticity work, if the practice elements are consisting of 1) tangible material, 2) extensive competence and 3) personal meaning. In addition, the thesis identified the temporal level of practices as a further influence that can define their ability to produce authentic identity cues.

Lastly, this study recognises an overly constructed dichotomy between continued and new, established practices, as already implicated in study of Keightley and Pickering (2014). The strict division of these practices, which even has found support in academic discourse (Keightley & Pickering, 2014), is the root cause for the here termed emergence of estranged practices. As estranged practice try to mix and merge practice elements of two

otherwise as separate perceived practices, they hold the potential to alienate practitioners from either of the initial two practices.

The second objective of this study thus proposes management strategies consumers may deploy to deal with these estranging practices. In general, three main strategies, that should be seen as a spectrum rather than isolated coping mechanism, have been identified: 1) rejection, 2) consolidation, and 3) acceptance, in which the estranged practice is not perceived as estranged per se.

Lastly, the findings of this study also indicate a correlation between the importance of a continued practice as authenticity work and the likelihood that a hybrid practice would be perceived as estranging. The closer the continued practice of film photography seemed to be connected to the authenticity work of an individual, the more likely they were to perceive hybrid practices as estranging.

5.3 Managerial Implications

Understanding the elements and dynamics of practices can be crucial for companies to correctly assess their target groups. As has been demonstrated in prior research on practice theory, misunderstanding practices, or underestimating the persistence and interdependence of elements and practices alike, can result in substantial failure (Shove & Pantzar, 2005). In this context, this study especially points towards potential difficulties with retro-branded products.

The findings showed that for practitioners of continued practices retro-branding seemed to be more likely negatively perceived, if the retro-branded product broke connections between material features and their original utilitarian use. Cameras like the Leica M10-D model were thus often perceived more negatively than cameras that were retro-branded only in their aesthetic, not functional, design. In an expression of this, participants often

thought of the Leica M10-D camera with its decorative thumb rest and removed screen as a gimmick or compared it to a toy (Leica, n.d.-a). Fujifilm camera models from the X-series in contrast are only retro-branded through a nostalgic camera body design and an optional film-simulation function (Fuji, n.d.-a). This way of retro-branding in turn attracted less critique and even received endorsement from some of the participants. Artificially mimicking part of the mechanical functions of film, without the actual internal mechanics to match it, thus alienated some users from these retro-branded camera models. By extension, these participants often developed a certain weariness of the brand itself and expressed critique of their general marketing communications.

This study thus points towards two managerial recommendations. For once, especially companies who build their branding strongly on heritage and tradition should be careful when introducing retro-branded products. Retro-branded products that utilise product features of the old product for their alleged signifying power alone, without any utilitarian reason, risk alienating consumers that are still attached to the old practice. Ultimately, this kind of superficial retro-branding might thus hurt the overall brand image and deter loyal customers.

Lastly, the strong commitment practitioners of continued practices displayed in the case of film photography may point towards potential business opportunities. If trends towards the continuation of a practice are noticed, especially companies with roots in said practice may profit from straight-forward reviving old production lines, instead of launching them as modified retro-products.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The research of this study has earlier been defined as intensive, focusing on the deep understanding of specific phenomena. As such, this study is able to give a detailed account of the studied concepts but is tightly dependent on the chosen research context

(Sayer, 2000). Being methodologically underpinned by critical realism, this thesis does aim to work towards the identification of underlying constructs of consumer behaviour and practice theory. Yet, this study is limited to the research context of film photography and thus would require validation and iteration through further studies on the derived conceptualisations in different context to make the finding more generalisable (Easton, 2010; Gorski, 2013).

Furthermore, the conducted research generated insights mainly through the conduction of interviews. While the interviews were designed to inquire in detail about the practitioners personal experiences and avoided bias through refraining from direct questions pertaining to authenticity, there remains a possibility of divergence between the verbal account of participants and their unfiltered thoughts and behaviour.

Lastly, this study's focus was particularly on film photographers. The participants themselves were sourced as diverse as possible, including amateur practitioners as well as professionals, and practitioners who used film photography exclusively as well as practitioners who equally used digital photography. While the scope of this study is therefore limited to film photographers, follow up studies may benefit from instead focusing on strictly digital photographers and practitioners of hybrid practices.

5.5 Directions for Future Research

This study added to the conceptualisation of authenticity work through the framework of practice theory. For now, this conceptualisation is however limited to the practice of film photography. To validate and iterate the findings of this study, further research into suitable other research contexts is required. The rise of interest in film photography is so far relatively new and only polaroid photography seems to have found its way back into the broader markets (Fujikawa, 2016). Therefore, it could be additionally interesting to test the concepts of this study in research contexts were continued practices have already

been further integrated in mainstream consumption again. Possible examples for this could be the music industry and the rekindled interest for vinyl records (Rosenblatt, 2018).

Furthermore, research could be done in similar contexts, where the dynamic between continued, new and hybrid/ estranged practices are different. Thus, contexts could be investigated were new practices only had mediocre success and the continued practices remained dominant, such as appears to be the case with e-books and print so far (Fruhlinger, 2018). Vice versa, continued practices which are actually fading out could be investigated, such as the disappearing practice of buying and watching movies on DVD instead of streaming them (Whitten, 2019).

Finally, the study identified an apparent connection between the authenticity work of continued practices and temporal aspects. Further research would thus be advised to investigate possible correlations between authenticity work and practices synchronised with slower temporal logics as their replacing counterparts.

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